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121 collaboration, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, and resolved that our photo-
126 graphs of the Negroes would be as sharply focused as had been our Savannah houses. The soft focus of the Ulmann portraits was not to our liking, nor was the poor quality of their reproduction. Ulmann's remarkable ability to capture an attitude and to reflect her subject's character we hoped to emulate. We soon learned that to photograph a person, particularly a child, was far removed from making a portrait of an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century building.

126 Our picture-taking expeditions were always led by Mary Granger. If our subjects were to be close by Savannah she would have made arrangements with friends or with members of her staff who conducted earlier interviews. The usual procedure was for our leader to engage the subjects in conversation at a spot we had chosen with an eye to light and background. The camera on the tripod and the black cloth
126 that we were forever ducking under to focus and compose
• 123 invariably provoked their interest and usually put them at ease. Mary Granger's confident and cheerful demeanor and her good sense of humor accounted for the bright, responsive expressions that show on the faces of many of the older people. She questioned as she talked, made notes on interesting responses, and often would chant the African song "Kum Baba Yaro," which she had learned from old Tony Delegal. This never failed to bring a look of incredulity to the faces of our subjects.

On the island trips and those to distant and remote areas our arrival was unannounced. Mary Granger was always ready to reward cooperative subjects or to persuade reluctant ones to be photographed with an offer of sweet rolls, tobacco, or old but serviceable clothes, all of which Miss Granger seemed to have in endless supply.

126 The *Drums and Shadows* photographs have appeared in
128 any number of publications, the artifacts and the Bowen grave markers more frequently than the portraits. The latter,

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skinned, proud, upstanding and loyal, suspicious of strangers but generous and trusting to friends (Plate VIII, IX, X). Most of the very old inhabitants have died in the past decade, so that to have reached the age of sixty places a man or woman in the patriarchal class. The grown people between twenty-five and thirty, are still close to the traditions and beliefs in which they have been reared. Firmly believing in the Bible, they still are aware of other beliefs and customs handed down by their parents and grandparents.

A pleasant, intelligent woman * of about forty-five chatted with us. "Cose, det is duh will ub God, but dey do say jis duh same wen a pusson die, 'Maybe somebody fix em'[15] aw 'I sho know dat uhmun wuz rooted.' I ain nebuh bought no powduh muhsef but jis day befo yestuhdy a uhmun frum Tatemville wuz right yuh tuh dis house sellin High John duh Conqueruh fuh fifty cent an she sho say it would bring yuh powuhful good luck, but I ain hab fifty cent.[8]

"Cose, it ain good tuh fool much wid dem tings, but yuh sho hab tuh be keahful not tuh let no enemy git hole uh yuh haiah combins cuz dey say dey sho could fix yuh den."[10] She laughed a little uneasily. "Ef yuh dream ub a snake dassa enemy neahby too, but ef yuh weah a snake skin roun yuh wais, it good fuh wut ail yuh.[504] * An ef uh enemy come tuh yuh house an yuh dohn wahn im deah no mo, yuh jis take duh bruhm an sweep out quick attuh im. Den sprinkle a lill salt on duh flo weah his foot track bin an sweep em all out duh doe an he sho wohn come back no mo."

At this point in her narrative a swarm of barefoot children, black and with shining eyes, clustered around us. One and all were eating crabs, biting into the soft part of the body shell or cracking a claw with strong white teeth. Word had evidently just gone out that some excitement was brewing. Strangers had come and were talking to "Miz Minnie." If anything was going on they didn't want to miss it.

* *Minnie Dawson, Pin Point.*

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•123 But "Miz Minnie" felt differently. "Go long, yuh chillun. Go long wid yuh crahb an stop lissnin tuh grown folks." Minnie flapped her apron and they scattered like a brood of young chicks.

754 "Yasm, cose yuh do heah bout cunjuhin."[15] Minnie turned back to us. "Dasso. Dey's alluz talk bout it, an I know ole Lewis McIver (Plate XI)[A] wut libs yuh right now, wut foun a bottle buried in his mattress. He wuz sick an somebody wuz tryin tuh fix im. I seen dat bottle muhsef, wid muh own eyes. Yes, ma'am, I sho seen it. It hab yulluhlak oily lookin stuff in it an deah wuz a piece uh clawt stuck tru wid needles an pins in it."[8] Minnie looked worried at the mere memory. "I seen it fuh sho an dohn nobody know who put it deah. But Lewis is bettuh sence it wuz took out. He say he ain hab neah so much pain.

"Den wen muh ole uncle w: sick,[15] dey sen fuh a ole uhmun wut know bout cunjuh[48] an she wehn out in duh yahd an dig up a piece uh clawt wadded intuh a ball wid nails in it an she cas it away. I seen dat too. She say somebody plant it deah gense im.

"Dey make mojoes outn anyting but dey do say grabeyahd dut[9] an nails an blood an haiah,[10] dey is impawtant. Cose I know bettuhn belieb all dis," she laughed, "but it make yuh sked an yuh sho full uh worry ef somebody tryin tuh fix yuh." After cogitating on these dangers Minnie (789) smiled, "But ef yuh weahs a silbuh dime tied tuh yuh ankle an yuh step obuh anyting wut put down fuh yuh, duh dime'll sho tun black sudden an quick an den yuh knows it."[12a, c, d]

682 Pin Point attained a certain measure of fame as the set-
674 ting of the Bo-Cat murder in 1932. Limerick De Lancy, Pin Point Negro nicknamed Bo-Cat, killed his wife, Catherine, and dropped her corpse into the deep waters near Hell (533) Gate. When the crime was discovered, the fact that it had taken place on Friday, the thirteenth, loomed significant in the consciousness of the small community and in no time in-



A. [See Category 142, plate following p. xxxii-K--Analyst]

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# *Sandfly*

SANDFLY, ABOUT NINE MILES SOUTHEAST OF SAVANnah, is a scattered Negro community spreading through the hot pine barrens to the Isle of Hope. There is nothing unusual or outstanding about the sleepy little settlement; its three hundred inhabitants appear to lead a placid, uneventful existence.

Many of the houses are situated on a side road which leads to the Isle of Hope. Modern conveniences are lacking, but the nondescript dwellings are brightened by flower gardens in the front yards, while small truck gardens occupy the space to the rear and sides. The more substantial houses of the more prosperous citizens are set deep in the wooded sections and are reached by means of narrow winding paths bordered with giant moss-hung oak trees.

Usually life in Sandfly flows along pleasantly and without serious interruption. Even in the morning men and women sit around on porches or in yards, sometimes talking, sometimes dozing in the sun. The more industrious are at work in the gardens or may be seen through doors busily occupied in washing or ironing clothes. Many of the men are employed as fishermen or day laborers, and the women who work out are generally engaged as house servants in homes at near-by Isle of Hope.

At first residents of the community were reluctant to talk about their superstitions and beliefs and their knowledge of conjure. Their customary response when first approached was a laconic, "No, ma'am, I ain got no fait in sech tings as

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cunjuh." When pressed for details, however, and when assured that the interviewers' interest was a friendly one, their attitude frequently changed and they talked volubly of queer happenings in the vicinity.

"They jis don't think bout nuthin but cunjuh," said one woman, a newcomer in the neighborhood.* "Yuh heah all the time of folks havin spells put on em an findin cunjuh bags buried in the yahd. All the times some folks are fixin othuhs.[15]

"A woman that lived in Homestead Park jis couldn't seem to have nothin but bad luck. She thought maybe an enemy had cunjuhed uh, so she looked in the yahd an sho nough theah wuz a cunjuh bag. It wuz a queah lookin bundle with a lot of brown clay in it. She destroyed the bag an the bad luck stopped an the evil spirits didn't bothuh uh none."

A small child complained to his parents that he felt snakes moving about in his head.[5, 50] A local doctor diagnosed the illness as ringworm, but this explanation failed to satisfy the parents for the child's own theory of snakes seemed to them much more convincing. One morning, soon after, the mother discovered a large snake crawling about in front of the house. She killed the snake and the next day the inflamed places on the boy's head began to heal. In a few days he was completely cured.**

Professional witch doctors and root doctors [48] ply an active trade and are employed in the more extreme cases, but often the people take matters in their own hands and by means of conjure bags and charms seek to alter their own destinies and those of their neighbors. Retribution is brought to bear on an enemy, the favor of a loved one is gained, and luck in business or in games of chance is assured by the possession of some sort of luck charm or powder.[8]

* *Lizzie Jenkins, Sandfly.*
*That this informant came from another section of Georgia was reflected in her speech.*
** *Ophelia Baker, Baker's Crossing*

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## *Sunbury*

OUR CAR CAME TO AN ABRUPT STOP IN THE SANDY road before the board fence which enclosed a small group of weather-beaten clapboard houses. We called to a young Negro girl who lounged in a doorway and she came forward to see what we wanted. Almost simultaneously there appeared from the other houses scattered about the clearing a number of other persons.

Two women about thirty-five years old and nine or ten small children all approached the fence. At first they were rather wary, but their attitude gradually turned to friendliness and they hung over the high board fence, talking and laughing in great good humor. Elizabeth Roberts,* the young girl whom we had first seen, appeared to be the leader of the group.

We were interested to know if these people had river baptisms any more. "Duh Sunbury Baptis Church an duh Palmyra Baptis Church both hab baptizins," Elizabeth told us. "Cose it depend on how many folks wants tuh leab duh Presbyterian Church an jine duh Baptis. Mos ub us is already baptize."

"Where do they hold the baptisms?" we inquired.

The group all pointed in the direction of the river. "Right obuh deah in duh Sunbury Ribbuh," they chorused.

Elizabeth again took the initiative. "All duh candidates is robed in wite," she explained. "Duh preachuh come frum

* *Elizabeth Roberts, Sunbury.*

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manner. The girl continued her work on the fish net, occasionally glancing at us with that impenetrable expression.

After much persuasion we gained the older woman's confidence and she spoke to us freely. She, too, attended the baptisms held by members of the two churches and also remembered various "settin-ups" she had gone to. She told us that food was usually prepared for the watchers.

"Bread an coffee," she said, "das wut dey gie yuh at a settin-up."

"We thought they ate chicken," we remarked.

"No, dey dohn hab no chicken. Jis bread an coffee."

The subject of food led us to inquire if she knew of any persons who refused to eat certain things.

"Muh huzbun wohn nebuh eat chicken. Ain nebuh eat it sence he wuz bawn, an needuh his mudduh befo him."[65]

"Why is that? Doesn't he like it?"

"Ain no mine wedduh he lak it aw ain lak it. He jis wohn eat it. Lots uh folks say deah's some food wut dey dohn eat. I nebuh eat rabbit. An none uh muh folks wouldn eat it needuh. Dey say it wuz no good tuh eat."

The conversation drifted on until the talk of food brought to the woman's mind gala occasions at which she had feasted and danced in her youth.

"We use tuh dance all duh time tuh duh drums," she said. "We would dance roun an roun in a succle an clap our hans an sing. Dey would hab duh dances obuh on St. Catherine Ilun."

"How would you know when they were going to hold a dance?"

"Dey beat duh drums on St. Catherine.[66] Den dey heah it at Harris Neck an folks deah tell all ub us yuh bout duh dance. We all go obuh tuh St. Catherine in a boat an dance an dance till mos daylight."

When the talk finally turned to roots and other potent

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115 Muh granmudduh jis refuse tuh die fo she seen me an duh
N63 baby. She say she hab tuh see us fo she die. Ebry day she ax fuhrus. She git weakuh an weakuh but she jis wohn die. Wen duh baby wuz a few days ole, I git dress an go tuh see uh. Fus I wuz fraid tuh bring duh baby intuh duh sick ruhm fuh dey say it bad luck fuh somebody bout tuh die tuh look at a baby. Sometime duh baby die too. I tell dis tuh muh gran an she laugh at me an tell me she ain gonuh take duh baby wid uh. Den I bring duh baby in an she sing tuh uh an hole uh in uh ahms. She tell me she wuz gonuh die now an dat I wuz tuh continue uh wuk wid duh folks yuh. Right attuh dat she die."

115 For a while longer the woman chatted on in a friendly manner, discussing various incidents that had taken place in the neighborhood. In parting they presented us graciously (123) with some fresh figs from the garden and asked us to visit them again whenever we returned to the settlement.

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helter-skelter about the enclosure. There was some wire fencing, but dogs, cats, chickens, a litter of very young puppies, and an old rooster roamed at will. Sunning themselves against a cabin wall were two old women, and from the windows of another cabin popped the heads of three curious younger women. An open door suddenly gave forth several children, smiling and scantily clad, shining eyes and surprised faces upturned to the strangers.

The two elderly women rose and came forward to greet us. Our guide explained our mission and inquired as to the whereabouts of Uncle Ben Washington, with whom we wished to talk. Aunt Sarah,* who was Uncle Ben's wife, explained that her husband had gone to work in the woods early that morning.

A glance at the dense forest surrounding the little clearing convinced us that Uncle Ben would be unlikely to hear the halloos with which our guides were attempting to summon him.

Just as we were about to abandon the venture a unique figure appeared inside the fence and Reuben Taylor, the older of our guides, exclaimed, "Deah's Uncle Ben now." Uncle Ben ** appeared in a long frock coat and high felt hat, carrying a walking stick. It was difficult to understand how he could have worked in such a costume. He seemed young for the eighty-five years he claimed, for he moved about with considerable agility.

As he drew nearer, Aunt Sarah went forward to greet him and the two old people came toward us together. When we again explained about the information we were seeking, Uncle Ben said with grave courtesy that he was glad to have visitors.

Thinking of the precarious journey that lay behind us and wondering how far from the main road this little settlement

* *Sarah Washington, in the pine woods about five miles from Eulonia.*
** *Ben Washington, in the pine woods about five miles from Eulonia.*

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## SAPELO ISLAND

361 Small Negro settlements are scattered at the north end of
491 Sapelo and are reached by winding roads that cut through
the tropical woodlands and brush. The Negroes are de-
461 scendants of the slaves of the plantation era. Many lead an
easy, carefree life which consists chiefly of fishing, crabbing,
and cultivating a small patch of garden, while others engage
in regular employment at the sawmill or in the company
offices.

178 Living an isolated island existence, these Negroes have
preserved many customs and beliefs of their ancestors, as
well as the dialect of the older coastal Negro. An old oxcart
[493] (Plate XVI)[A] jogging along a tree shaded road is a familar
[412] sight, and under the guidance of a Negro boy named Julius
we discovered instances of crude wooden implements in com-
[124] mon usage. The many Negroes interviewed gave a graphic
picture of survival elements that have persisted since the
days when slave ships brought their ancestors to the new
country.

115 One of the oldest inhabititants is Katie Brown (Plate
XV),[B]* whose grandmother, Margaret, was a daughter of
Belali Mohomet, the Mohammedan slave driver of Thomas
Spalding. Katie, sunning herself on the back steps of her
small house, was disposed to be gracious to us. Shaking her
• [123] head at the size of the shoes brought to her as an incentive to
conversation, she relented at the sight of some pipe tobacco
and began to talk:

533 "I dunno bout drums at chuches. Use tuh hab um long
534 time ago, but not now on duh ilun,—leas I ain heah um.
527 Hahves time wuz time fuh drums. Den dey hab big times.[38]
Wen hahves in, dey hab big gadderin. Dey beat drum,
rattle dry goad wid seed in um, an beat big flat tin
plates.[23, 25] Dey shout an moob roun in succle an look lak
mahch goin tuh heabm. Hahves festival, dey call it."

764 In response to our query about "set-ups" Katie replied,

* *Katie Brown, Sapelo Island.*



A, [See Category 493, plate following p. xxxii-U--Analyst]
B, [See Category 142, plates following p. xxxii-Q and R--Analyst]

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115 row wooden gate opened into a field where a winding path led to the small cabin of Julia Grovernor,* called Juno by the island Negroes. Julia, very black, tall and gaunt, was slightly hostile and suspicious and disinclined to talk. Even
• [123] the pipe tobacco, potent in most cases, she indifferently dropped.

"No'm, I ain know nuttn. Ise feeble-minded. I bin weak in head sence I small chile. No'm, I ain know nuttn bout witches. I ain know nuttn bout root doctuhs. No'm, I ain nebuh heah uh cunjuh. No'm, I ain know nuttn bout spells. No'm, I ain kin tuh Katie Brown."

115 124 This refusal to answer except in the negative seemed to continue indefinitely. Finally, however, after innumerable slow, quiet, good-humored questions that showed no resentment at her hostility, she became friendly in a reserved and superior way. It was soon evident that this sullen, reticent woman, though hostile to outside invasion, was not feeble-minded, but on the contrary sharp-witted, with a dry sense of humor.

829 "Muh gran, she Hannah. Uncle Calina muh gran too; dey bote Ibos. Yes'm, I membuh muh gran Hannah. She marry Calina an hab twenny-one chillun. Yes'm, she tell us how she brung yuh.

829 567 "Hannah, she wid huh ahnt who wuz diggin peanuts in duh fiel, wid uh baby strop on uh back. Out uh duh brush two wite mens come an spit in huh ahnt eye. She blinded an wen she wipe uh eye, duh wite mens done loose duh baby frum huh back, an took Hannah too. Dey led um intuh duh woods, weah deah wuz udduh chillun dey done ketched an tie up in sacks. Duh baby an Hannah wuz tie up in sacks lak duh udduhs an Hannah nebuh saw huh ahnt agen an nebuh saw duh baby agen. Wen she wuz let out uh duh sack, she wuz on boat an nebuh saw Africa agen."

* *Julia Grovernor, Sapelo Island. Deceased winter, 1938.*

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another Belali Mohomet descendant, who came to the door of his neat cottage clad in blue denim. Delighted to have visitors, Shad was eager for conversation. With a few polite words of thanks for the pipe tobacco, he began to talk of the old days.

"Muh gran wuz Hestuh, Belali's daughtuh. She tell me Belali wuz coal black, wid duh small feechuhs we hab, an he wuz bery tall. She say Belali an all he fambly come on same boat frum Africa. Belali hab plenty daughtuhs, Medina, Yaruba, Fatima, Bentoo, Hestuh, Magret, and Chaalut.

"Ole Belali Smith wuz muh uncle. His son wuz George Smith's gran. He wuz muh gran Hestuh's son an muh mudduh Sally's brudduh. Hestuh an all ub um sho pray on duh bead. Dey weah duh string uh beads on duh wais. Sometime duh string on duh neck. Dey pray at sun-up and face duh sun on duh knees an bow tuh it tree times, kneelin on a lill mat."

We asked Shad if he had ever heard his grandmother say anything about Africa. Had she ever mentioned what sort of house they lived in or what food was generally eaten? Shad nodded eagerly, and from the steady flow of talk that followed it was evident that he had heard much of the land of his ancestors.

"Muh gran Hestuh say she kin membuh duh house she lib in in Africa. She say it wuz cubbuh wid palmettuh an grass fuh roof, an duh walls wuz made uh mud. Dey make duh wall by takin up hanfuls uh mud an puttin it on sumpm firm, sticks put crossways so. I membuh some pots and cups dat she hab made uh clay. She brung deze frum Afric... She membuh wut dey eat in Africa too. Dey eat yam an shuguh cane an peanut an bananas. Dey eat okra too. Yes'm, das right, dey calls it gumbo. Dey dohn hab tuh wuk hahd wid plantin deah. Jis go in woods an dig, an git big yam. Dey eat udduh roots too. Dey ain no flo tuh

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115 We went by to talk with Charity Lucas, a fine looking upstanding, middle-aged Negro woman. She told us she did not know much about her father's people,—they had come from around Carolina,—but her mother and her mother's people had come from around Waycross and she herself had been born in Waycross. She said that the coast Negroes were very different from the interior people. She had heard talk of conjure and spirits around St. Marys but she didn't believe much in it herself; she had not been brought up that way.

Her son Robert (Plate XXII), A a tall, lithe, powerful young Negro of about twenty-five, was rather taciturn. He had heard of these things but didn't care to speak of them and didn't believe in them much anyway.

Charity advised us to go to see old Jim Myers. "Now theah's one that's ole an'll be able tuh tell yuh plenty. He's neahly ninety and sho likes tuh talk."

We asked if his memory were good. "Yes'm, it's as good as mine. I guess it's bettuh."

We asked for directions and she told us how to go, ten miles deep into the woods off from the St. Marys-Kingsland highway.

491 Our road and what later turned out to be a pine needle wagon track carried us through Marianna, John Houstoun McIntosh's plantation, through Sweetwater Hammock and on through other settlements to Mush Bluff Island where old Jim Myers lived. The last mile we had to walk, owing
•123 to some swampy patches in the wagon track. A Negro boy of about eleven sauntered around a bush, and his eyes popped open in frightened surprise at strangers appearing so suddenly in the woods.

"Does Jim Myers live near here?" we asked.

342 "Right theah roun the cawnuh of the path," he said, and we came suddenly upon the house, a three room unpainted, board cabin sitting about two feet off the ground on large,



A, [See Category 142, plate following p. xxxii-DD--Analyst]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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121 tigation, the material and data needed to solve the problem, and the field procedures most likely to be useful.[3]

122 Preparing a research design is one thing; actual entrance into a Sea Island community is quite another. Because the islanders are suspicious of all outsiders, one group of investigators has suggested that research in the islands and in other black communities be conducted in conjunction with local, community-controlled agencies that provide services to the communities.[4] These agencies can be asked to verify the integrity of potential Sea Island investigators and to approve the uses to which they plan to put the results of their research. Not only do organizations of this sort have access to a wide range of information that would be useful to the researcher, but the researcher can reciprocate by making available to the agency any useful information that he or she acquires from outside sources. Coordinate research reduces the risk of community exploitation and is likely to produce positive results from the community.

124 No matter how careful one's planning has been, as I learned quickly, one may find it necessary to deviate from customary methods of assembling data and to adjust the procedures and time allotted for a study to correspond to the temperament and discretion of the informants. For example, included in the preliminaries made in preparation for my research was a word list containing minimal pairs for the elicitation of vowels and consonants. Because the list was long, and the elicitation so painfully slow and exacting, I did not attempt to procure this information until almost two years after my initial investigation. By then the informants knew me well and were willing to tolerate such a tedious procedure. Even with their willing assistance, it took as long as a week, sometimes more, to complete the word list for one informant.

123 No research design or methodology, of course, can assure a successful investigation in any discipline in the Sea Island communities. In many ways the success or failure of a study becomes dependent on the islanders' response to the personality of the researcher, and their willingness to accept both researcher and project. Of primary importance, one must have a convincing reason for being on a given island. Patricia Nichols, to take one example, acquired entry into a river island community as a teacher—a profession highly valued by the Sea Islanders. According to her, working in a highly visible capacity at a job that made sense for the particular community chosen allowed her to observe and participate in a great variety of speech events.[5]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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123 People in general are often insecure about their particular varieties of speech, and collecting spontaneous speech data can be a problem for anyone conducting a linguistic survey. It is even more of a problem on the Sea Islands because the native speakers of Gullah can and do adjust their speech to produce the closest possible approximations of standard English when they are addressing strangers. To eliminate pressure on the speakers to avoid the creole speech (and to help validate my presence), I explained that one of my objectives for being on the islands was to learn as much as possible about folk medicine "roots," folktales, "lies," and "the old-time talk." I explained, for example, that my grandmother had taught me to identify and collect herbs or roots which were helpful in alleviating certain ailments or even in effecting certain cures. These topics generated much interest and humor; consequently, I was able to assemble a wide store of knowledge concerning medicinal cures, complete with folktales, as well as to collect several varieties of speech data.

123 437 Something I learned by sitting through one market day in Charleston illustrates a final point. As I observed an islander selling tomatoes, I realized that she felt much more satisfaction when she sold her goods to a person with whom she had haggled assiduously over the price than when she sold the same amount for a higher price to a well-intentioned but clearly patronizing customer. She had been robbed of the satisfaction of arriving at an "agreed" price. Feelings about the inequality of human beings had been transmitted along with the unequal prices of the tomatoes.

123 124 Achieving and maintaining equality in relationships is crucial when striving to establish rapport with informants. Kenneth Goldstein cites a statement to this effect made by Alan Lomax in 1950 during a symposium on data collecting at the Mid-century International Folklore Conference held at Indiana University:

> People say to me that they would like to help me along with my work, that I look as if I need help. And I tell them that I am taking up their time and that I would like to make it up to them. There was never any question of dignity being involved; none of us in our situation was more dignified than anyone else. If the informant liked to drink, I drank, and if he liked to acquire a salary, I haggled with him very hard and very seriously, but we fought over it as equals.[6]

[p. xxiv is blank]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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# Introduction

539 [i bɪnə dɹiŋk di βɔrə
ɛn i gɔt ɹait ɸə ste iə]

*She has partaken of the water,*
*and she has the right to live here.*

101 The life-styles, tales, and language peculiarities captured in this book were unearthed during more than nine years of research with the Gullah- or Geechee-speaking Sea Islanders of Georgia and South Carolina and three months of field work in Nigeria, West Africa. Like
121 most Americans, I was in total ignorance of the existence of the Sea Islands for many years—in my case, until 1972. Once I heard about them, no amount of library research and no amount of reading about the Sea Islanders could quench my desire actually to see for myself how they had managed to retain so many more remnants of their West African ancestry than African-Americans in other parts of the country.

133 On my first trip to the Sea Islands, in 1973, I remember crossing a
491 bridge leading from Charleston to James Island, crossing another one from James Island to Johns Island, and then another one from Johns Island to Wadmalaw. On Wadmalaw the scenery changed drastically, and the farther I drove along the narrow, winding road into the depths of this remote island, the more unusual my surroundings became: hanging moss; dense woodlands; flat, "boggy" swamps; and the musty, sweet aroma of ocean air. A person could get lost forever on these islands, I remember thinking. As I would later learn, it was this very remoteness which contributed to the continuation of the African-derived culture of the Sea Island area.

• 123 I turned around a deep bend in the road and continued on, ultimately

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123 arriving at New Jerusalem African Methodist Episcopal Church. I attended church service because one must go to church to see the greatest gathering of people, and one must have the minister's sanction for one's work if one is to gain cooperation during the research. I was introduced to the congregation, and after the service the islanders were warm and hospitable, as is the custom on the church ground and as is common practice in many southern communities. But once we left the grounds, most members of the community became very conservative and even hostile concerning the mechanics of their culture. Their reactions to me followed a specific pattern. First they asked, Whose daughter are you? Because I was not the daughter of anyone on the island, the next question was, Who are your people here? As I had no relatives on that island or any island, the next question was, Whom did I know, or whom was I visiting? When they learned that I neither knew nor was visiting anyone, [124] most interviews ended on the spot—even though most people had promised at church to offer their assistance.

Quite by coincidence, I gave an elderly lady a ride to Charleston. As I drove along the winding roads, she told me that she lived alone, loved to crab and fish, and took a "nip" for her arthritis every now and then. She had lived in the Wadmalaw community all her life and had a host of relatives and friends on neighboring islands up and down the Carolina/Georgia coast. She knew the traditions; later, she would be instrumental in helping me to learn them. Because this lady was socially active and was held in high esteem, she was ultimately able to provide me with acceptable answers to the questions Sea Islanders ask of all new faces. I became Miss Myma's "granddaughter" who lived away and came to visit every summer.[1] (My greatest accomplishment would be finally getting her to leave Wadmalaw and come to Michigan to visit me.)

123 609 Having a person well known and well respected to provide a lineage helped in my approaches to the community. But since most people born on any given island know each other, I soon realized that I had the status of "outsider," and no outsiders, black or white, are welcomed warmly into Sea Island activities or viewed without suspicion until they have spent considerable time among the people, performing daily tasks and becoming involved in daily living activities. The people have long been ridiculed for their speech, life-style, and mannerisms. In addition, they are very much aware that their culture has been a topic of interest to folklorists, linguists, historians, and others since the

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early twentieth century.[2] Thus they are quite naturally suspicious of anyone taking notes, carrying equipment, or wandering about unaccompanied by a resident. The islanders are a proud, perceptive people and can very soon sense insincerity and patronizing attitudes. It generally requires more than an offer of cash payment, gifts, or other remunerations to motivate them to assist a researcher's study. Though it was not my original plan to become indoctrinated into Sea Island culture through hard labor, I learned very quickly that most of the islanders are active, "going" people. Those who are not engaged in city jobs are likely to be fishermen, farmers, carpenters, housewives, basket weavers, market people, or laborers in the produce fields. Often workers allowed me to accompany and assist them, and I found that the rewards for becoming involved in daily life through hard work were great indeed. Returning home from a day in the fields in an open-bed truck, listening to the islanders laughing, joking, and planning for the weekend, made the tasks I had accomplished that day seem easier. Equally important, I obtained some of the most interesting speech data while learning to make baskets or working in an okra field.

After five years of gathering information on the Sea Islands, I went to Africa in 1978 to compare the Sea Islanders' language and culture with the patterns of some of their ancestors. The Nigerian villagers' welcome was far warmer on my first introduction to their communities than the Sea Islanders' had been. Many of the elderly Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio women had never seen an African-American woman and walked some distances to see the *Indocha*, or what was termed a "white-black woman." The label was used not out of disrespect but for lack of a better one to refer to a person born from African heritage but raised speaking a European tongue. After I explained my purpose for coming far "across the water," I was never in need of anyone to assist in any efforts. The villagers were as eager to hear what words, customs, and traditions the Gullah speakers retained as I was to tell them. Their eagerness was sharpened by their fervent hope that somehow some of the language, literary traditions, and social customs had derived from their particular culture, whether Igbo, Yoruba, or Ibebio. Life among these people was fascinating and amazingly similar in some ways to the life patterns of the Sea Islanders, even after the passage of centuries. It is about these similarities in language, literature, and culture that I promised to write this book.

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skilled speakers as well as dancers and singers, while women are expected to be responders, doing the clapping and rhetorical backup. Though some women do tell tales, they most often do so in the privacy of their homes when the men are away. Likewise, the Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio women seldom tell tales in the company of men, although alone, or in the company of other women and children, some of the Sea Island and African women are avid storytellers.

On occasions when a storytelling contest was held at the community store during my stays on the islands, many women came to hear the stories, though few of them actually told tales themselves. Miss Myma, the elderly Sea Island lady with whom I resided and who accompanied me to most preplanned telling sessions, always told the first tale, but more in an effort to sanction and add approval to the occasion than as a traditional practice. Several women with whom I had spent time over a seven-year period came to the storytelling contest but bluntly refused to tell any stories. After the session ended and the men were awarded the prizes by the island judges, these women approached me and asked that I come by their homes the following day. I did so and was told many tales, as well as given many folk remedies, cures, and songs. One lady, highly respected in the community, permitted me to hold two storytelling contests at her home. However, she refused to come outside to listen to the tales because the audience was comprised primarily of men. I learned that women are not expected to participate in activities that are considered primarily male-oriented activities. Within the Sea Islands as well as within certain African communities, only women who are elderly or held in fairly high social esteem can participate in such activities without fear of censure.

Most of the tales told by women and elderly men are told during the daylight hours just after lunch when they take a break from the daily chores just to "catch some breeze" or "sit in the cool." One elderly gentleman, nearly one hundred years old now, often entertained me for hours with tales, historical events, and reminiscences before he resumed his afternoon plowing with his favorite mule. This man is particularly interesting because he firmly believes that a man should live apart from his wife and family. Until his wife's death very recently, she lived in a fairly large, modern dwelling with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren while he lived in his shanty located behind the main house and near the other homes within his yard area. His wife prepared his meals and brought them to him at

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538 Then members of the group may sit and tease each other for a while, telling jokes, playing the dozens, taking a little nip, or just sitting and enjoying one another's company. When I was there, after the group had kidded around until everyone was laughing and in a fairly congenial mood, I was usually granted permission to turn the recorder on, and it was time to tell some tales.

With older storytellers, the sessions often begin with a song, religious or otherwise. During the singing, the members of the group join in enthusiastically, singing, clapping their hands, or swaying with the rhythm. After the song ends, the audience is usually ready to hear a good tale. Regardless of the ages of the members of the group, the most impressive stories are always told after the group has had a chance to talk, kid around, play the dozens, sing, or just be "sporty." The friendly teasing and cordial verbal exchange relaxes the audience and serves the same purpose as the *akuko eji awake nti* in Igbo: it prepares the listeners so that they will participate in the telling of the tales by responding to certain cues given by the performers.

A speaker may begin his tale by indicating that he is going to tell a story about Ber Rabbit. The audience (or a given respondent) may clap their hands, laugh, and rock back and forth to indicate their interest and repeat, "Ber Rabbit, Ber Rabbit, Ber Rabbit!" This response demonstrates that the speaker has engaged their interest and attention and that they are now prepared to hear his tale. As the tale progresses, if the teller is entertaining and effective, the listeners will continue to respond to his every word, laughing and joking, clapping their hands, and urging him on with his tale. The audience is not a captive one; if the teller is not skilled in narrative technique, and his tale or delivery is uninteresting, then the listeners may wander away to get something to drink or talk to others and return only when a better speaker is talking. This response undoubtedly has an effect on the teller, who may try to hurry and finish his story so that someone else can have a turn.

Most audiences react to onomatopoeic words, repetitions, and chants. They respond as a chorus by repeating some of the speaker's words or phrases in unison or singularly. A practice very common both in Africa and on the Sea Islands is an interplay between the speaker and a given member of the audience. In an Igbo village, for example, Raphael Amaugo often called on his friend Cornelius Onunwa to help him remember the details of a story that Raphael knew quite well. The

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She is fifty or more years of age, gets around well, is the oldest member of her household, and is primarily responsible for the total care of more than ten children, ranging in ages from two to sixteen years of age. Some of them are her own children; others are her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Six of them live with her, and four are left in her care during the day while their parents are away working. I had the pleasure of spending more than two weeks residing with Miss Deeley and her large family. I shared a large room with three of the girls and came to appreciate the effort that went into keeping that room clean and orderly at all times. No one was allowed to retire for the evening without a bath regardless of circumstances. Most of the time, a fire was built around a large black pot in the early evening to heat the water for baths before supper was served. All the children were lined up and given baths in a number-three washtub, given their nightclothes, and served supper around a large handmade wooden table. Miss Deeley had not accepted electricity for her home, so a kerosene lamp was the primary source of light after nightfall. Mealtime was always a pleasure at this home. The last meal of the day often consisted of cowpeas and rice cooked and seasoned with "bone," or rice served with shrimp and other fish caught by the children during the day. There was always hot corn bread and molasses and a bucket of iced tea.

After meals were served, the children gathered around the open fireplace, and Miss Deeley entertained all of us for hours until the fire died down and the sleeping children had to be carried to their beds. This woman was an avid storyteller. Her general procedure was first to get everyone settled. Then she herself could get comfortable in the place always reserved for her by the window. After poking around in the fire until she was satisfied that it was burning well, she would lean back in her chair, take a couple of good bites of tobacco, kept in her apron pocket, and then lift up the youngest child into her lap and begin to reminisce about happenings during the day. She had the ability to tell a range of stories, but she seemed particularly adept at hag, ghost, or other psychological thrillers. She traveled around much in her day as a migrant worker in Arizona and Colorado; she said she heard some of her stories around the campfires there. Others she had learned from her parents and grandparents, and still others she said she had just made up to keep the children entertained.

Miss Deeley was fairly strict with the children. Once she permitted two of the oldest to go to the island store for some "sweet"; she spat

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159 20 538 slowly pulled his fist apart to suggest a slow stretching process, saying, "Stretch out, stretch out, stretch out." Then, in a sweeping motion, he tightened his fist and with one violent jerk emphasized the king snake's ultimate quick, spasmodic motion.

159 524 Mr. Mickell is a great talker The speech samples I obtained from him ranged from childhood experiences to tales of the bizarre. He is a good singer and participates in the shouts with enthusiasm. But the outstanding feature in his repertoire is a collection of dozens and dozens of riddles. Riddling is a pastime activity common among the older Sea Island men and women. In fact, Mr. Mickell and one of his close friends often sat for hours telling riddles until one or the other ran out of riddles to tell.

159 123 342 Without a doubt, *Aneatha Brisbane, Miss Myma,* is my closest link to the Sea Island communities. She was born in a shanty, still standing on Wadmalaw Island, and never really ventured far from the site on which it now stands. Her mother lived in the shanty before Miss Myma was born, and when she died, Miss Myma continued to live there until she purchased a one-bedroom trailer some fifteen or twenty years ago. The trailer was a weather-beaten shell of a home consisting (365) of a living room, a kitchen, and a bedroom. It had no running water, no electricity, and no toilet, though it was equipped with appropriate con- (514) nections. I soon understood that while these things are primary for survival for most Americans, to stay on the Sea Islands I had to be 159 ready to live without them. I learned to adjust my eyes to the kerosene lamp that Miss Myma lit so that I could read after nightfall. I learned to 123 make sure that we got wood in to burn in the potbellied wood stove to warm the house in the cool mornings. I learned that if I filled a number-three tub with water from a neighbor's well in the morning and set it in the hot island sun all day, the water would be just the right temperature for a refreshing bath in the evening.

159 Miss Myma is a very sophisticated-looking woman, with high cheek bones, reddish brown skin that she says she acquired from the Wadmalaw Indians, and the most beautiful white hair I ever saw. She is naturally friendly, smokes a pipe, and is said to have been very lively in her younger days. She is soft-spoken and generally restrained in her language (though I have heard some of her women friends use words which would make the vulgarest of men shrink in shame). Her manner can be deceiving, however. I observed her once in an argument with

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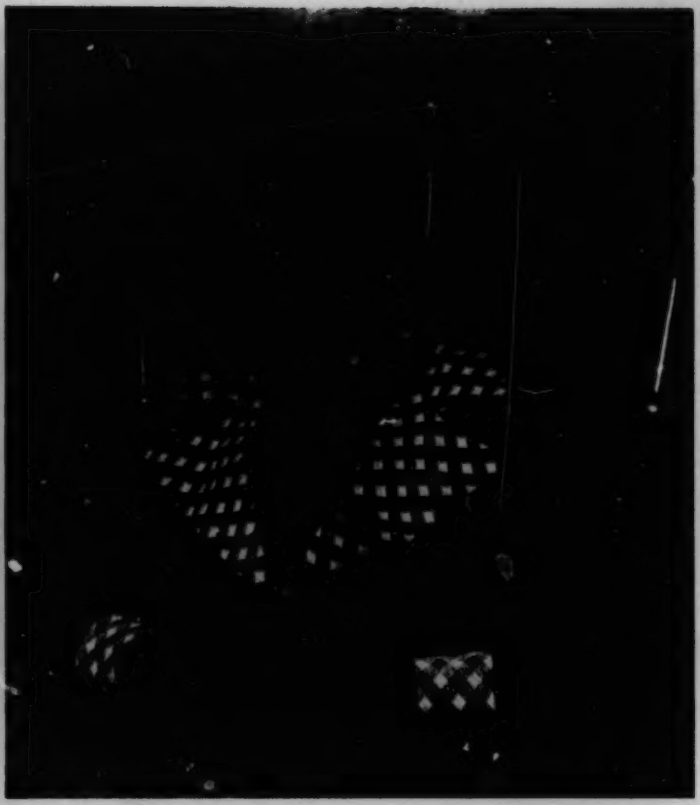

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Miss Myma, who has lived her entire life on Wadmalaw Island, befriended the author and introduced her to the ways of the island and its people.

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159 one of her friends, who accused her of taking some tobacco which Miss Myma clearly could not have taken. Her friend attacked her viciously and called her some scandalous names. With each insult Miss Myma replied, "You de right, darlin," or "Sho will, honey," or "I know you ben tell truth for sho, baby." Finally, the friend looked rather foolish, throwing out insults and having them accepted so calmly. So, clearly feeling unfulfilled because she had not had the satisfaction of arousing Miss Myma to any angry word play, she left kicking up dust and looking back over her shoulder as she stalked down the sandy lane from Miss Myma's house. I had seen Miss Myma at her best in heated arguments over far smaller issues before; thus I asked her in amazement why she had not retaliated and defended herself forcefully. She took her pipe from her mouth, shook it in the direction her friend had taken, and replied thoughtfully that that particular woman was a fool, and she left fools in the hands of the Lord.

159 Miss Myma was apparently in her mid to late seventies when I met her. She told me that she "forget" how old she really was, but she
• 123 could come close if I could tell her how old some of her childhood friends were. In spite of her age, she remains one of the most active people on the island. She taught me to crab, net, and fish. In fact, I caught my first dogfish while fishing on the banks of an island stream. The thing actually had feet and barked like a dog when I caught it on the hook. When I asked if the fish were edible, the children standing on the bank laughed at my ignorance before they said no.

Every day was an exciting day with Miss Myma. We got up around six o'clock and drove the fifteen or more miles to James Island to get a cup of coffee. Miss Myma liked to ride, and I loved the invigorating smell of the Sea Island morning air. If we were going to the creek that day, we would gather our gear beforehand. If we were going "bog-
159 ging" for crabs, which was Miss Myma's preferred way to catch them,
123 we would get our sticks and go to the creek after the tide had gone out.
226 Bogging for crabs is hard work; one even needs specific shoes for this venture. When the tide goes out, many crabs are left in the various nooks and crannies of the creek bank and bed. The stick is used not only for support but to prod into holes to scare out the crabs. When one is found, it is provoked into clamping onto the stick and then pulled up and dropped into a large bucket. If the crab is ornery and refuses to clamp onto the stick, the stick is used to hold him down. He is picked up from the back and his two front claws are quickly clamped together;

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159 then he is thrown into the bucket. In a good season one gets more crabs
123 than one can eat in a couple of hours. If the season is bad, one can stay
226 out in the creek all day in the sultry island sun and still have only a few "po, skase [scarce]" little crabs. During the bad seasons it was usually I and not Miss Myma who finally had to come in. She could walk miles in those creek beds. One day, when we had come upon a pool of water deeper than the regular creek bed, and thus not emptied by the tide, she decided she would teach me to throw a net. She stooped, pulled out her net, stationed part of the midpoint in her teeth, stretched a portion along her arm, circled the net a bit for balance, let go of the string, and twirled the net up over the small but deep hole of water. The net circled, fanned out, and landed on the pool. "Good throw, Miss Myma," I cried out. She replied, "Got em, a mullet for sho, Pat." It was true, she had netted several mullet, but what she didn't know was that she had netted a snake as well!

159 Crabbing can be dangerous for those unfamiliar with "ocean
123 time." While one can bog for crabs when the tide goes out, one can net
226 a few when the tide starts back in. I learned that the trickling sounds
133 heard only at certain times are made when the nooks and crannies are being filled with water. I also learned that the tide can be deceiving because it comes in very slowly. Once we had been walking on the muddy creek floor for hours when I casually observed that the water was covering my shoes; a little later I noted that it was over my ankles. I thought I was just walking into deeper puddles and thus continued to practice my netting. Then I found that the water was beginning to hit me above my knees. Suddenly I became alarmed and looked back down the creek the way we had come. It was only then that I realized that the water was not only filling the creek bed but had covered the marshland, and there was no clearly perceivable way back to the higher ground. Frightened, I yelled out to Miss Myma that we were going to drown. She stopped, looked up and down the creek, pulled a bit of Day's Work chewing tobacco out of her pocket, took a good bite, offered me some, grinned when I passed on it, and finally said, "Guess time we fe go now." She had crabbed in that creek since she was a child, and she knew every bend and angle of it. Without her experience, however, I believe I would have panicked and perhaps drowned because it takes only minutes for the tide to rush in and fill the creek at any given point.

159 Miss Myma's presence was imperative at storytelling contests,
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whether held at Mr. Ted's store or in the clearing under the big Angel Oak tree behind her trailer. As noted before, Miss Myma always told the first tale at a preplanned storytelling, as a way of sanctioning the event. Really not much of a storyteller, she was more relaxed when a group of her "nipping" friends decided to tell "lies" at her house than at gatherings at Mr. Ted's store. The huge Angel Oak, with its ghostly hanging moss, shaded the ground so grass would not grow around it and thus helped to provide a clean, insect-free surface on which to relax. It also served as an anchor for Miss Myma's many respectable and some not-so-respectable friends, a place to sit, smoke, take little nips, and catch the breeze throughout the day. By late afternoon, when her respectable friends had long since gone to return to jobs, see about the children, or attend to chores, her not-so-respectable friends, not having to be responsible to anyone or anything, would settle in and ready themselves to tell lies throughout the night. Miss Myma's sleeping times remain a source of fascination for me. I could never understand how she managed to get up so early and go to bed so late. But then, many of the islanders are night people, roaming the highways, dancing, listening to music, and visiting friends in the dark. There were, however, occasions when Miss Myma actually got up and went to bed, leaving her friends still nipping under the oak.

In the winter of 1976 Miss Myma finally agreed to come to Michigan to visit me. She would not consent to fly; she would come only if I sent her a Greyhound bus ticket. I sent her the ticket and was delighted that she actually did come, and even more delighted that she would stay for three weeks. It was horribly cold in Michigan that year; Miss Myma did not care to go outside, and cared even less for the nine-degree-below-zero temperature and the mounds of snow. She preferred the warmth and comfort of sitting by the fireplace in our den, smoking her pipe. I was glad that we had a fireplace, and especially happy when she looked into the fire and began to reminisce and tell my two young children tales of Ber Rabbit. She gave them an oral tradition of tales in those three weeks that could not be matched with a lifetime of written literature. They were utterly fascinated by her. She knew my three-year-old daughter well not only because I had taken her with me to visit the Sea Islands but because on one of those occasions my daughter, who is asthmatic, had a severe attack around three in the morning. I had used all of her medicine, and there are no drugstores on Wadmalaw Island. Miss Myma observed her labored breathing for a while, and

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chastised me for not keeping an extra bottle of her medicine with me. Then she got up calmly, took her kerosene lamp, went out in the field behind her house, dug up some kind of root, brought it back, washed it, and boiled it. When the tea from the root had cooled, she took my wheezing daughter into her lap and coaxed her into drinking a cup of the reddish liquid. Twenty minutes later my daughter lay asleep and breathing peacefully on her lap.

In the fall of 1982 Miss Myma's trailer caught fire from her kerosene lamp and burned. Fortunately, she was not injured in the fire. She went to live with a relative whom she had raised as her daughter and who lived only a few doors away. Miss Myma is well into her eighties now. Her daughter told me that her mind wanders from time to time and that she has a tendency to wander off physically from home. In fact, she strayed down to the creek and was lost overnight at one point. A rescue squad was called in, but she was not found until the next morning when a helicopter pilot spotted her sitting out in the open field just beyond the creek banks. She was alert and did not suffer as much as a cold from the dampness and exposure. When I saw her most recently in the spring of 1985, she was sitting under the Angel Oak, a little nip in one hand to warm her blood, a crabbing stick in the other. She was smiling faintly and waving goodbye to me as I headed down the lane. She looked as if she were waiting for just the right moment to slip off down to the creek and nab a crab or catch a mullet "for sho."

*Ida Mae* is different from most of the women on the Sea Islands, very different. After having five children out of wedlock, and becoming a grandmother four times over by the time she was thirty-nine, she told me she had given up trying to be respectable in that community.

Ida Mae was an attractive woman when I met her in 1973. She had nut brown skin and flashing white teeth accented by a gold tooth that glistened in the sun when she laughed. She had the kind of face that was designed for the close-cut, boyish afro that she kept edged to perfection. Her light hazel eyes—"devil eyes," the islanders called them—were offset by her rich, dark color and gave the appearance of jumping out at you. She liked her eyes and said they were one of the reasons that she had had the gold tooth put in. In fact, when she first got it, she said, she used to practice smiling and turning her head just so the light would touch on her eyes, her tooth, and the large fourteen-karat gold hoop earrings that one of her men friends had given her. She

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159 afternoon, while buying a soda at Mr. Ted's store, that she had on a
832 mighty fine-looking dress and it was sho' hitting her in all the right places. She turned, gazed into his eyes just a split second longer than what was respectable, flipped a few ashes from her cigarette on his shiny black shoes, smiled ever so slightly, and walked away. He watched her as she moved out of his eyesight. Then he hitched up his pants, put both hands in his front pockets, and asked the Lord to give him strength.

159 Late one Saturday afternoon I walked up the lane past the Angel
123 Oak behind Miss Myma's house to visit Ida Mae. She lived in a two-room shanty with three of her five children. The two older girls had lived with her mother since they were born. There were no children yelling and screaming outside, however, so I thought Ida Mae was not home. I started to leave when she popped her head out of her bedroom and said, "Hi, Pat." I was lonely, so I was glad to find her in. I asked her why it was so quiet, and where the children were. She said she sent them down to her mother's house to spend the night. When I asked her why, she replied, "Ain't you business, but I de spect company soon, and when he de come, you go have fe leave." I said that was okay. We sat on the broken steps in front of her shanty and chatted about general things, children, school, work, people on the islands.

She asked about my husband and if he didn't get jealous with me running around down there. I said i didn't think so, that I had really never given him a reason to be jealous. She replied that men never needed a reason to be jealous, that they were jealous by nature and it was to a woman's advantage to keep them that way. She asked what I was doing on the islands every year, and what Africa had been like, and if the men loved big-butt women there as much as men did here. I told her that I was trying to reconstruct Africanisms, and yes, the African men loved big-butt women as much as Sea Island men did. In fact, I told her that my female friends in Nigeria had teased me because my rear end was not as round as theirs, and I had retaliated by saying that was true for me, but the Sea Island women still had behinds that would put theirs to shame. She laughed and said she was glad I told the bitches that.

She offered me a cigarette. I thanked her but refused, saying I didn't smoke. Then she offered me a shot of whiskey; again, I thanked her but refused, saying I didn't drink. Then she offered me a joint; I thanked her and said I didn't smoke pot either, and wondered where

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123 she had got it. She turned, studied me a moment, and said, "You ain't de drink, ain't de smoke cigarette, ain't de dulge in pot. What de hell you do for fun? You de Jehovah Witness or something?" I laughed and told her I liked to travel, write, and come down there to visit her. She shook her head and replied that I must lead a sad life if coming down there was what I called fun.

As we sat talking and gazing out at the dusk and incoming fog, she asked me if I remembered the time I had gone with her to work in the field tying tomatoes. We laughed and reflected on that day. She had told me that if I really wanted to go I had to get up around six o'clock, put on some long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and borrow one of Miss Myma's wide straw hats. I could hardly sleep that night thinking I would oversleep and miss the truck. Miss Myma woke me up, though, and cautioned me for the fifth time that it was too hot in the fields, that some people had had sunstrokes, and that I should stay there with her until Ida Mae came back in the evening. For the fifth time I said no, I wanted to go. When I arrived at Ida Mae's house dressed in my tomato-tying clothes, she grinned at me and asked if I had brought anything for lunch. I said no, so we walked down to Mr. Ted's store, and I bought some Vienna sausage and crackers. Then we stood by the highway until Dan Seabrooke came along in his truck and picked us up to drive us the ten or so miles to the tomato patch. Once we got there, we piled out and were each given strips of twine and told to take a row. I took one between Ida Mae and one of her friends because they felt that between the two of them, they could help me keep up.

Tying tomatoes is a monotonous, tiring, backbreaking job. Some of those rows were more than a mile long. A stick had been hammered into the ground to support each plant. We took the twine and tied the plant to the stick near the base, in the middle, and at the top. Each plant was about a foot from the next, and when we had tied one plant to its stick, we moved on to the next one, and the next one, and the next one, and the next one until we reached the end of the row. When we reached the end of one long row, we turned around and started back down another long row. It took a while for me to get the hang of what to do, and thus I found myself falling behind the others in the field. Ida Mae stopped tying her row and started tying my plants in front of me, so that when I got up to that point I could skip to where the rest of the people were. Around ten o'clock I was tying as fast as I could and sweating profusely. I did not think I could make it until noon and finish at least half a day, but Ida Mae told me if I could tie just until I reached

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159 the big Angel Oak down on the end it would be noon and I could rest.
123 That consoled me. She said that when our shadow was directly under our feet on the row we were tying it would be twelve o'clock. When that happened, true enough, the whistle blew and we stopped, walked back to the truck, took turns getting cool drinks of water with a dipper from the cooler in back of the truck, got our lunches, sat down, ate, and rested.

One o'clock came only too quickly, three came too slowly, and five o'clock quitting time not quickly enough. The temperature rose to more than 103 degrees, and there was nothing between the sun and my head but Miss Myma's straw hat. I will always be grateful to Ida Mae for her help that day. She tied her row and most of mine, but I could at least tell Miss Myma that I had made a day! I would treasure that day and that ten dollars as among my most demanding achievements.

159 As we sat and continued to wait for Ida Mae's company, I re-
123 minded her of her summertime addiction to card playing. When she did not catch a truck to go to the fields, she spent the day, from sunup
525 to sundown, with her card-playing buddies. They took turns buying a nipping bottle to help them get through the day. I met her when she came to play cards one day under the Angel Oak behind Miss Myma's house and Miss Myma took me out to meet her and her friends. I think I enjoyed these people more than any other group on the Sea Islands. When they played cards, they played for money, and for keeps. They invited me to play once; I accepted and lost twenty dollars my first game. After that, I just sat and listened. I learned that Ida Mae could outplay and outcurse any of the men. In addition, she could match them word for word playing the dozens. Once a card-playing friend asked her to scramble him some eggs for breakfast. She replied, "I ain't you wife." He said he knew that, but he still wanted some eggs. She answered, "I ain't you maid." He said he would pay her to cook them. She replied, "With what? I de win all you money." Then he said, "Well, I pay you with something else then." She answered, "You ain't got nothing else I de want." He said, "Well, you de come on and de go with me and you de see what I got." She burst into laughter and said, "What for I ben go with you, you ain't know what fe do with me if you de get me!"

159 Now we sat on in the dark. Eventually we saw the lights from a car
123 coming up the lane; the car stopped in front of the shanty, and a tall attractive man got out and, as was customary, handed her a half gallon of ice cream as a gift. Since I already knew him, and also knew that he

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159 was another woman's man, I excused myself and walked back down
[123] the lane to Miss Myma's house.

A few years ago Ida Mae lost her mother, and a while later her
159 father. As the oldest, she had to move back home to become the head
596 of her extended family, according to traditional Sea Island practice. Among those who now needed her was John, a mentally retarded cousin around thirty-six or thirty-seven years old. She told me that the reason she could not accept a ticket to come and visit me was that she could not trust anyone else to take care of him. John frightened me when I first met him, not because he was retarded but because he was alert enough to know the value of money and, running out to my car when I drove up, grabbed my arm and demanded, "Quarter, quarter, quarter." He would not let go until someone had given him a quarter. Later I realized that was how he managed to have money to buy pop and ice cream whenever someone went to the store: everyone who came to Ida Mae's house had to give John a quarter. He was purported to keep them in socks, hidden somewhere around the house.

I last saw Ida Mae in the summer of 1984. She had lost weight and no longer had the old sassiness in her walk or devilishness in her eyes. After all, she has to take full responsibility for more than twelve people now, and surely that is enough to drain some of the spunk out of even the sassiest of women. Nevertheless, as she sat on her front porch fanning flies and rocking her new grandbaby, a gentleman drove up, got out of his car, and said that since it was "hot too much" out, he thought she might like a little ice cream to cool her off. She took a long draw from her cigarette, turned, gazed intently into his eyes, and smiled just enough for him to see the glint of her gold tooth.

159 I found that Ida Mae's presence served as a welcome catalyst for
[538] spontaneous, ribald storytelling. Although she was unbeatable at playing the dozens, she was not herself much of a storyteller. Because of her life-style she felt she was an outcast in the community. She seldom ventured far from home, unless she was going to work in the field; seldom associated with women other than those who played cards with her daily; and seldom attended church. Thus she had little opportunity to come in contact with language other than the creole, and as a result, her speech was more characteristic of contemporary Gullah than most.

115 *Ozzie Rivers, Mr. Hampy* (Happi), was a very religious, serious man who could sit for hours sermonizing and philosophizing about

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had often been hospitalized for short periods for her condition. She finally lost the battle or, as some islanders said, she finally won the battle, staked her sword in the golden sand, and went home to the Kingdom of God on 4 July 1984. Mr. Hampy was told, and he died the next day, 5 July. Some said that the couple had been together so long that his spirit had become a part of hers and that when she died, he died simply because he lacked the will to live without her. Others commented that since her body remained warm so long after her death, she was waiting for him to follow.

Their funeral was one of the most elaborate I have seen in the Sea Island area. The cost was well in excess of fifteen thousand dollars, a total which the couple had prepared for over the years by paying on their funeral policy. They had matching blue caskets with intricate gold designs. Hers was covered with a spread of pink flowers, his with a spread of blue ones. The undertaker was careful with such details as having her coffin brought in first and stationing her coffin to the left of his. These were things that the viewers would observe and remember when they selected someone to handle their own funeral arrangements.

The Presbyterian church was packed beyond capacity, and I stood outside the door of the church along with other friends hoping to see the couple one last time. Two male associates had accompanied me to the funeral and stood among the other men on the church ground, chatting. As a female, I knew that I was not permitted this liberty. Women do not stand outside the church and chat when services are going on. If they cannot get inside the church, they stand as close to it as possible or remain in their cars. In a break with custom, the caskets were not opened for viewing the bodies; I walked with others more than two miles up a long, narrow, muddy lane to the gravesite, still hoping to see their faces. However, before I made it up the lane, they had passed the younger children over the caskets to prevent their spirits from being "touched" by the spirits of the dead. As is traditional, they buried Mr. Hampy and Miss Maime side by side, she on his left, in a densely wooded area to help enclose their spirits. Each grave was covered with flowers and clocks were set at the time each one died.

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## Present-Day Gullah

Since the early 1920s Gullah has been known to vary regionally; recent studies by Irma Cunningham, Patricia Nichols, Charles Joyner, Salikoko Mufwene, Ian Hancock, and me, conducted in different areas of the Sea Islands and the adjacent coast indicate that there are still distinct varieties.[8] Minor details such as consistent use of the pronoun *e*, which is applied to both sexes, and a distinctive fricative "fizzing" sound on words beginning with *w* would go unnoticed by casual observers. However, they permit the islanders to detect when one is from a different island, when one is a total outsider, and when one is trying to talk "proper," in the negative sense of the word. In fact, during my first few years on the islands, I learned that I should not try to pass myself off as an islander by an attempt to imitate the Sea Island language. While I may have had the syntax right, I was never able to perfect the accent, and it is the stress and intonation that give one away. When I asked the islanders how they were able to detect such small differences, I was often told, "I ain't know how I de know, but I de know." And they did know.

The outside pressures now exerted on the Gullah-speaking communities in the coastal areas of Georgia and South Carolina have created the general conditions that David DeCamp describes for post-creole speech communities (i.e., communities in which a creole is in the process of merging with a standard language). There is a correspondence between the dominant official language and the creole, and new educational programs and other infusions from the outside have broken down the formerly rigid social structure enough to cause social mobility and to motivate large numbers of Gullah speakers to modify their speech in the direction of standard English.[9] Given this sociolinguistic situation, the Sea Islands offer an ideal opportunity to investigate linguistic convergence and change.

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify several facts about Gullah in order to distinguish it from the speech of other black Americans. First, whereas Gullah is a creole, inland black speech is defined as a dialect of English, that is, as a variant of the English language peculiar to a particular region or social context. A dialect of any given language is similar to that language in phonology, vocabulary, and syntax; such differences as may exist often result from regional or social variations, and most dialectal variations present few

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# Notes

## Preface

1. For a note on the usefulness of interdisciplinary approaches see David DeCamp, "Toward a Generative Analysis of a Post-Creole Speech Continuum," in *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, ed. Dell Hymes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 369.

2. For a detailed discussion of field procedures in general see Kenneth Goldstein, *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore* (Hatboro, N.C.: Folklore Associates, 1964).

3. See ibid., p. 21.

4. Juanita Jackson, Sabra Slaughter, and J. Herman Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource," *Black Scholar*, March 1974, pp. 32–39.

5. For further discussion of entrance into Sea Island communities see Patricia Nichols, "Linguistic Change in Gullah: Sex, Age, and Mobility" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1976).

6. Goldstein, *Guide for Field Workers*, p. 173.

## Introduction

1. The titles *Mr.* and *Miss* have more significance in Sea Island communities than they do outside. They are used in daily interaction with those who are felt to have earned particular respect, becoming part of their names.

2. See Lorenzo D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 11–12.

## Chapter 1

1. Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource," p. 32.

2. These estimates were derived primarily from the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester (BCD) Council of Governments' *Report on Economically Less Developed Areas in the Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Region*, 1980.

3. For a detailed discussion of the folk life and language of Sandy Island and the

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nearly six hundred registered black voters were added to the rolls in Charleston County through the efforts of the citizenship school.

Guy Carawan first arrived on Johns Island on Christmas eve of 1959, and Esau Jenkins took him to the all-night Christmas Watch Meeting in Moving Star Hall. There Guy encountered African cultural survivals and what he called "the oldest form of Negro folk life still alive today in the United States." He had come to Johns Island from Highlander Folk School to learn about sea island culture and to serve as a chauffeur for Septima Clark, who did not drive. A native Californian with family roots in South Carolina, he had a master's degree in sociology and some training in folklore when he came to live with Esau Jenkins on Johns Island. Septima Clark and Esau Jenkins took Guy to community meetings and church services, where he met and sang with various members of the black community. "With these two beloved leaders to vouch for me," he noted at the time, "I've had the inside track in getting to know people who under different circumstances might be suspicious and unfriendly." He was inspired by the islanders' Afro-Christianity and their "praise house" form of worship. He thrilled to the old sea island spirituals and the islanders' "shouting" style of singing them. He fell in love with the sea island folktales and folk beliefs. He immediately recognized the importance of the rich folk culture he encountered on Johns Island, which would bring him back to the island year after year.

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During his first winter on Johns Island, Guy developed a singing program as a new feature of the citizenship schools. The singing program had two purposes. One was to help keep alive the islanders' beautiful singing traditions. The other was to build group consciousness and boost morale by singing the old spirituals, protest songs, and other folk songs. The singing program proved to have profound inspirational value for everyone who participated.

One day Guy sang a version of "Keep Your Hand on the Plow." He had learned the song in the 1950s as part of the Peoples' Songs Movement. Alice Wine told him she knew "a different echo to that" and sang a sea island version. Guy passed on

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114 her version, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," to
123 young civil rights workers at conferences in 1960.
533 Thus it was that the Johns Island version of this
(669) spiritual became one of the great inspirational
theme songs of the civil rights movement.

875 In 1951, prompted by the rapid growth of cit-
874 izenship schools to other islands and the Charles-
641 ton area, Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson de-
veloped the first program to train citizenship
school teachers. This curriculum spread through-
out the South as participants came from the Car-
olinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Ten-
nessee. Thousands of teachers were trained. Such
875 community leaders as Fannie Lou Hamer in Mis-
641 sissippi and Hosea Williams in Georgia went home
871 to teach and to organize voter registration cam-
563 paigns. They simply refused to put up with segre-
(668) gation anymore. By 1962, when the major civil
rights groups turned their attention to voter regis-
tration, they were able to use the approach pi-
oneered in the citizenship schools between 1957
(664) and 1961 because by then it was clear that the ap-
proach worked. Thus the citizenship schools on
Johns Island were the foundation for the voting
rights movement and played a major role in the
overthrow of Jim Crow.

114 SINCE 1959 Guy had spent part of each year work-
ing with the citizenship school on Johns Island. In
1961 Guy married Candie Anderson; and in 1963
they moved to Johns Island with their small son,
(123) Evan. During the next two years they shared in the
life and fellowship of the black community around
Moving Star Hall. Their purpose was to help pre-
serve some of the older black folk culture on the
island by bringing honor and recognition to it. As
Guy wrote to Pete Seeger in 1965, "These days,
you can go to any one of the major folk festivals at
Berkeley, UCLA, Chicago, Philadelphia, or New-
port and see some of the finest folk talent in the
country. But the communities from which these
people come have been neglected. Leadbelly and
his music are forgotten in Shreveport, Louisiana.
I'm hoping our work on Johns Island (South Car-
olina) will provide an example of what can be done
in other areas. It would be a shame to let this mu-
sic die at the roots." To that end Guy and Candie

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114 area. Visiting the islands year after year since then, we are still concerned with the survival of its culture.

We did not come as traditional academic researchers. We came to work with a literacy and citizenship program developed by the Highlander Folk School to empower people. We knew this program would bring needed change to the islands. In a sense we had to create a role for ourselves which would both encourage that change and nurture those cultural roots. Guy worked during the winters between 1959 and 1961 using his music as part of the literacy classes. He drove Mrs. Septima Clark, the supervisor of the program, throughout the islands. He was introduced to the community by Mrs. Clark and by Esau Jenkins, a long-time fighter for progress and change, and was therefore accepted as a friend.

114 •123 In 1963 we moved with our small son into the middle of the community around Moving Star Hall, the praise house and gathering place for many of the people Guy had met in the literacy program. During the next two years we gradually got to know our neighbors until finally they were sharing with us many of their real treasures: their warmth, generosity, candor, and humor, their wisdom, their songs and stories, the good times in their homes and fellowship in their social and religious gatherings. We recorded many hours of interview material, life experiences, religious expression—particularly several all-night watch meetings in Moving Star Hall, folktales and remedies, children's game songs. We produced two albums and published the first edition of this book. During this period we worked with Esau Jenkins and others to put on a series of sea island folk festivals for island residents and for visitors from the lowcountry area and elsewhere. We also arranged for a group of singers from Moving

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Star Hall to travel to other parts of the country to share their songs, in an effort to keep alive some of the older folk material. Each of these projects brought a complex mixture of success and problems and a renewed determination to keep trying.

For generations the Johns Island people were relatively isolated from mainstream America. The low, flat island, covered with tidal creeks and marshes, farmland, and forests of oaks draped with gray Spanish moss, was accessible only by boat until the early part of the century, when bridges and causeways connecting it with the mainland began to be built. Cut off from the mainland, these descendants of cotton plantation slaves retained many aspects of the old slave culture: a regional dialect, Gullah, still marked by distinctly African and Caribbean traits; a large body of folktales, cures, and supernatural beliefs; and a folk version of Christianity with a "shouting" style of singing old spirituals and hymns and a local "praise house" form of worship.

Old and new institutions existed side by side. For many people, Moving Star Hall—a tiny, battered clapboard building—had been the central meeting place for nearly fifty years. It housed a "tend-the-sick" and burial society, a secret lodge, and a community of worship. Here the members could express themselves freely and fully; in the Sunday night worship service each person took a turn preaching, testifying, praying, and raising a song.

Down the road a mile or so is Wesley Methodist Church, where a number of these same people attended regular Sunday services. Here the old folk ways were gradually being replaced by more formal modern practices. Wesley is a fine church with handsome pews, Methodist hymnals, a robed choir, and an organ. On the first Sunday of the month everyone listened to the Reverend G. C. Brown, who came from the mainland in the 1930s with a college degree, and sang hymns and spirituals led by the choir. But on the three Sundays a month when he preached in other churches, the congregation forgot about the organ and the hymnals and sang older spirituals, hymns, and shouts.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

128 I am grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Charles A. Ferguson, Gillian Sankoff, and Elizabeth Closs Traugott, for their invaluable ideas, suggestions, and encouragement at various stages of this study. I am indebted also to three people who early encouraged and aided my investigations of Gullah: Edith Trager Johnson, Raven I. McDavid, Jr., and Rebecca Agheyisi. Without Irma Cunningham's [127] earlier dissertation on the syntax of Gullah, the present work could not have been undertaken.

122 During my field work in coastal South Carolina, many
123 people gave concrete help of different kinds. Through the courtesy of William S. Young, Thaddeus Thompson, Edgar Caddell, and Peggy Walker, I was able to spend valuable time with the school children of rural Georgetown County. In the island community, Prince and Rebecca Washington introduced me to the community and spent hours of treasured conversation with me. My mother, Mildred Mitchell Causey, and her sister, Annie Laurie Bonnette, opened their homes to me whenever needed; I benefited in many unforeseen ways from their years of teaching in the public schools of the state. Another-
128 native of the Waccamaw region, historian and folklorist
129 Charles W. Joyner, was a source of crucial information and

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CHAPTER 3

FIELD WORK PROCEDURES

3.0 Overview

121 123 Having been raised in the white community of an adjacent county in South Carolina, I recognized early that establishing rapport with the black community in rural Georgetown County on the level conducive to good research would be one of the most difficult parts of the field work for the present study. Accordingly, I sought the advice of others who had done field work in rural South Carolina and in non-European communities in the southwest. Through J. 121 Herman Blake and his colleague, Triloki Pandey, of the University of California at Santa Cruz, I became aware of the concept of action anthropology, first developed in the work of anthropologists from the University of Chicago on the Fox Project in southern Iowa during the forties and fifties. 121 Since this concept has influenced greatly the procedures 128 followed in my field work on Gullah, I will discuss in section 3.1 the major issues addressed by action anthropology and their possible extension to action linguists. Section 3.2 will discuss the field worker's functions within the community, and section 3.3 will describe the collection of data.

121 Tax's earlier description of the motivations behind the project (1958) shows how the students moved increasingly away from preconceived notions about concrete actions which would help the Indians solve specific problems, to a process of allowing actions to evolve from discussions and activities in which they and the Indians participated together. Within such an ongoing process, their learning about community values and structures was deepened, and the general approach proved both to enhance the research and to help the community.

Since my goal in the South Carolina study was the description and analysis of selected grammatical features undergoing change in the speech of the community, rather than an ethnographic study, I found it necessary to make modifications of the notions developed within action anthropology. While these modifications did not alter the larger goal of helping the community in the process of learning about its language, they did entail less mutual discussion and action with the community than did the original Fox Project. Because my time was limited to no more than six months in the area, I relied on intensive observation of community behavior patterns, discussions with school officials, and knowledge

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Chicago and interested in social problems facing recent immigrants to the U.S., Mead engaged in community work during his teaching years at Chicago--work which almost surely contributed to his ideas on the relation between Self and Society. His ideas on language, similar to those of Wittgenstein and valuable to sociolinguists, are only now becoming publicized from the lecture notes of his students (Miller, 1973).

121 of past community action projects to determine what my most
•123 useful and acceptable function could be as a working participant in community life. It is my belief that my working in a highly visible capacity at jobs that made sense in terms of the particular community's values allowed me to observe and participate in a great variety of speech events during the short span of five months. It is true that speech directed to me often reflected the particular role I had assumed, but it is also the case that by having a valid reason for being among the people at a variety of times and places, I had the opportunity to observe a wide range of language activity in which I was not an active participant. I believe that these observations allow conclusions about the range of linguistic variation in the community to be made with a greater chance of validity than had I worked only with informants in the traditional manner or with select small groups in the manner of some recent sociolinguistic
121 investigations. It is my hope that a kind of action linguistics might be stimulated by the approach outlined here, which would add to the productive methods developed by sociolinguists like Labov, Stewart, Gumperz, and Hymes by fostering a more purposeful integration of the linguist into the community in some functional sense. It may be that such a community-based language experience will promote the kind of applied linguistics which Ferguson has called for over the years. (See Ferguson, 1975 for a summary of these

121 views.) In newly independent states and nations and in a pluralistic society like that of the United States, such action-oriented field work may now be the only feasible kind, as previously dominant groups interact with those now assuming control over their own institutions and directions for the first time. The telling factor, of course, in choosing such an orientation for linguistic field work should be the kinds of insights into the nature and uses of language gained by this approach.

3.2 Functions of the Field Worker Within the Community

• 123 872 Because the river island which was the focus of my study was largely inaccessible to outsiders, I initially obtained a job as a volunteer teacher's aide in the elementary school on the mainland which island children attended. For several mornings a week I assisted a white female teacher in the upper grades, who taught more than one hundred pupils, the majority of whom were black, in both science and social studies classes each day. During the course of a morning, I came in contact with one to three island children in each class, and encountered a broad spectrum of language characteristic of rural Georgetown County. As much time as possible (126) was spent initially in listening to the children, recording certain grammatical constructions on paper as they were heard and noting the speaker and the circumstances. Switching from creole features to more standard usage was noted,

123 872 especially when younger students spoke with the white teacher whose native dialect was a midwestern variety of American English, and differences in playground language and classroom language were also observed. Significant lack of understanding between teacher and pupil occurred on occasion. Efforts were made on both sides to remedy this lack of understanding, with children switching from Gullah syntax to more standard forms when asked to repeat an utterance and with the teacher giving additional directions to certain pupils known to have some difficulty in understanding her expectations. The teacher made no noticeable alteration in her language patterns, however. Whenever possible, other classrooms were visited and services appropriate to a teacher's aide were given when asked for. Conversations with the staff were helpful in learning of the difficulties which had been faced by beginning teachers who were unfamiliar with language patterns in the area, and in learning something of the attitudes toward language held by those staff members who were native to the county. The range of language used by the teachers themselves was also easily observed in informal groups having coffee or engaged in playground duties. Attendance at parent-teacher meetings gave limited contact with some parents in a school setting and with several school board members and community leaders.

123 As I got to know individual children, I made efforts to extend my contact with them beyond the school framework.

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123 Taking my cue from the expressed desires and interests of the children themselves, I accepted requests to go fishing and learned from the children how to do it. These expeditions led to stops at my living quarters for supplies, and other children subsequently requested visits to my place. Several such visits by small groups of children provided invaluable insights into the range of language at their command. Conversations in a moving automobile were especially revealing about the fluency of the very youngest children, who spoke little in the classroom situation. Visits to some of the children's homes were a natural follow-up. Other activities outside the classroom included a field trip to the local steel mill in town with four children from a social studies class, attendance at church services, prolonged stops at the local grocery store and launderette, and shopping trips to town on Saturdays where I frequently encountered students and their parents.

The initial visits to the river island were made in the company of children I had become acquainted with in the school situation, and included a tour of the landmarks they considered of potential interest to me: a graveyard, the church, the abandoned elementary school, the open space by the school where they played ball. In their home environment I was able to observe interaction between situation and language, contact between children of different ages and the status relationships which prevailed, and some of the

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•123 distinctive ways in which language was used in informal situations outside the school environment. On an early visit, an older child was observed to admonish a younger sibling not to talk that "country talk," in obvious concern that an outsider was present. Later visits included, whenever possible, an automobile ride from school to the boat landing for five or six children, who engaged in animated conversation with each other and largely ignored the presence of the driver. A more official introduction to the island community came at a church service on the island about two months after I had begun work in the mainland school. By the time I was invited to attend church on the "preaching" Sunday, I had become well enough acquainted with some island residents and past history to suggest to the head deacon that I might teach a volunteer writing class one night a week in the abandoned schoolhouse. Originally, I had entertained the possibility of teaching basic literacy classes, but interviews with older residents had changed my notions of the educational level and aspirations of the islanders. On the basis of what I had learned from daily work in the school and from visits to the island, I assumed correctly that a college-preparatory class would be welcomed by young people on the island. When I outlined my proposal for the congregation at the close of the church service to which I had been invited to present it, more than a dozen young people and some of their parents signed up for the class. Meeting this class weekly for the remainder of

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•123 my stay brought contacts with an age group which ranged from junior high school students to young adults in their thirties. More importantly, it gave me a reason for being on the island which was accepted by the community, and which brought many hours of cherished conversation in homes as I shared meals and stayed overnight when I taught. It also gave me unexpected data on sex and age differences in use of the written code, as I taught a modified version of the freshman composition class I had taught for several years at junior colleges in California.

3.3 Collection of Data

126 Recording sessions on the river island were conducted
124 in individual homes, using a Sony cassette recorder, model TC-92. Two initial recordings were made of older men describing the rice-planting process, using a hand-held microphone. The resulting data were clearly formal register and have been treated as such in the analyses. Subsequent recordings were made using a small clip-on microphone, Sony ECM-16, and produced more natural conversation. Topics ranged from descriptions of living conditions and activities on the island before the coming of electricity and motorized boat transportation, to discussions with teen-agers of whether or not they might remain on the island as adults. The common thread which ran through all the recorded conversations was the distinctive island life. While no formal

126 questionnaire was used, efforts were made to establish
124 whether or not the person had lived off the island for any considerable length of time, since it became apparent that mobility was a factor influencing language change. The approximate age of the speaker was usually revealed in the course of the conversation. From a total of sixteen recorded adult conversations on the river island, twelve have been selected for the comparative analysis of language change and social factors in the final chapter. These twelve were chosen to include two men and two women from three natural age groups, determined from my observations of interaction in the community. Older adults over sixty-five no longer worked outside the home regularly and remained on the island most of the time. Middle age adults, who had growing families, commuted off the island daily to jobs on the mainland. Young adults, most of whom were not yet married, engaged in frequent school and social activities with each other. All
• [123] recordings used in the analyses include the researcher as participant, as well as whatever family members happened to be present. All were made with the knowledge and consent of the principal speakers.

Originally, the project had been conceived of as including a comparative analysis of individual speakers' language use with an outsider and with an in-group member.
[123] It was not possible to record natural conversations between island residents without the participation of an outsider,

126 but such a range of language use would be highly desirable
124 for inclusion in any comprehensive analysis of language
(123) change.[2] Observations of such conversations were made, and some anecdotal information will be included as a supplement to the recorded data. The one recording made without the
114 researcher as a participant is an example of highly formal
126 register; the circumstances of this recording were that an elementary school child took home a recorder at my request and asked her grandmother to record memories of her youth on the island. In effect, the recorder itself acted as a participant, and was the recipient of a carefully rehearsed speech.

In addition to recordings of conversations with
126 island residents, conversations with selected mainland resi-
124 dents were also recorded. From observations made of language used by school children and by some mainland residents encountered at various community activities, it had become apparent that the lower socio-economic group on the mainland retained more creole features in their speech than did island residents. For comparative purposes, therefore, four conversations made with speakers from this sub-group of this black

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[2] Denison (1969, 1971) provides a description of the range of language used by a particular community, in his study of a plurilingual community in the Carnian Alps. His analysis was based on observations made during extended vacations in the community, not recorded electronically, and serves as a model for the allocation of language resources which a given community might show.

126 population in rural Georgetown County are included in the
124 analyses of linguistic variables and in the comparison of social factors influencing linguistic change. These four recordings include two men and two women in the oldest age group.

Some recordings were also made of a wide range of children in the school setting. Most of these are relatively short stories told by the children or ritual insults exchanged by them at the very beginning or end of a recording session. Because the environmental setting and the kind of speech event differed from that of the adult recordings, these language samples cannot be directly compared with those obtained for adults. A summary of their characteristics will be included in the discussion of the sex, age, and mobility factors which affect language choices. All island children in grades three through six were recorded telling an anecdote or ghost story of their choice; the grammatical features used in these stories can be usefully compared from child to child. These classroom recordings were made as a natural
126 part of my activities as a teacher's aide. Since part of my
[123] classroom duties had entailed helping a small group of non-readers in sessions in which we had recorded the children's own stories for use in reading, working with small groups of children using the tape recorder was an ordinary classroom activity. The typed versions of stories told by the children were sometimes read to the class by the students themselves,

5: Nichols L-5 (no date) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Georgetown

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL FACTORS

5.0 Overview

121 197 The present chapter deals with the social factors of sex, age, and mobility which appear to influence the activation of linguistic change for individual speakers. The variables of sex and age were chosen prior to the field work done for the study, on the basis that these social factors have been shown repeatedly to influence language usage. Mobility, i.e., living or working inside or outside the community, was chosen as a third variable after some time in the field. Observation of children's language use in the (123) classroom and on the playground and conversations about their travels and visits with relatives indicated that the range of language at their command was closely related to the extent of their geographic mobility. Interviews with adult (124) speakers subsequently elicited information about their geographic mobility, after it became apparent that its effect on language use could be even greater than that of economic 128 status for the population being studied. Section 5.1 will discuss the relationship between sex of speaker and language use; 5.2 will consider the factor of age; and 5.3 will discuss

124 had slit openings in their middle. Each box was throughly shaken after the slips were dropped into them. Before the first slip was drawn and after each subsequent draw the box was shaken. The drawing method was to blindly reach into the box and pick up one single slip of paper. This procedure was repeated ten times for each box. After ten slips had been drawn, the numbers on each slip was matched with the number and corresponding family names on the list for that island. When these ten families had been identified and noted, the slips were returned to the box from which they had been drawn. This overall procedure was repeated for each of the five boxes. The ordering of the boxes and consequently the drawing order corresponded with distance from the mainland. In this scheme, the James Island box was first and the Edisto Island draw was last.

The second task under this set was to authenticate the family compositions of the selected family units. Using the available entries, the researcher showed up at the address or family gaps of the tentatively selected units. (123) At this point the researcher explained his purposes, which was always prefaced by a detailed description of the researcher's family linkage. Then, at what the researcher deemed an appropriate point in the discussion, inquires were made about the composition of the family units. As a result of these inquiries only those units which met the

124 deleted in total. The first reducing action was taken be-
125 cause these questions elicited an extremely wide range of responses and was therefore judged as irrelevant and tangential to the experience of the respondents. The second deletion was taken because the complete instrument was too time consuming and tedious to complete.

124 The second major modification was in the method of administration. It quickly became evident that insisting on the absolute isolation of respondents was a hindrance to and heighten the inhibitions of the interviewees. The adopted procedure was to insist on interviewee privacy only to the extents to which privacy was feasible. See Appen-
[125] dix A for study instrument and subject categorization form. A

INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

• 123 The presence of the researcher in the Family Gap ob-
124 viously disturbed the family activities. To counteract this effect the researcher made pre- or non-interviewing visits to each Gap before actual interviews were begun. The purpose of the pre- were to acquaint the researcher with the fami rs (their patterns) and as importantly to have the family get adjusted to the researcher. These visits lasted as long as was necessary for this adjustment to take place. These visits lasting from "day clean" until late in the evening hours provided the

A, [See Category 125, pp. 80-82--Analyst]

researcher ample opportunity to explain the nature of the research effort and to alleviate any concerns which were voiced. When the researcher was satisfied that these objectives had been met, the actual interviews were begun.

When all members of a unit had been interviewed, this procedure was repeated at the next Family Gap. When all interviews were completed on one island, the researched moved on to the next island repeating the same procedures until the interview schedule was completed.

INTERVIEW METHOD

The participation observation interview was used as the data collection method. A structured interview utilizing thirteen questions was administered. Each interview was conducted from a structured format. After the respondent had designated where the interview was to be held, the actual procedure was to engage the respondent in conversa ion about the family. The focus of the conversations were initially directed at general aspects of the family and as the discussion continued the researched directed the content of the conversation by directly asking each question on the instrument. Respondents were allowed to answer questions in as much detail as they wanted. The researcher followed each complete response with the question "does dat about cover it?" If the respondent said yes, the researcher asked the next question. If the response was no, the

123 researcher asked "what else need be said?" and respondents
124 were allowed to complete their answers before the next question was asked.

RECORDING RESPONSE

124 A structured response sheet was used to record re-
126 sponses. This sheet contained a listing of each question and the possible responses. When a response was one of the listed responses, the researcher merely checked that response. When responses were offered for which no previous categories existed, these responses were entered under the category "other" for that question.

At the end of each interviewing day the researcher added those responses in the other category to the list of possible responses. The final activity of the day was to tabulate the responses.

RESPONSE MEASUREMENT

124 Responses for question Number 3 were scaled on a five
125 point design. Twelve of the questions had pre-established response categories. Each question was followed by a list of from three to eight separate response categories. "Other" was the last response category of each question. Responses which did not fit into existing categories made up the other categorical responses (see questionnaire, Appendix A). A 4

A,[See Category 125, pp. 80-82--Analyst]

124 Consequently, this procedure was relaxed to some degree during the actual interviews.

•123 Had not the researcher been a native of the Sea Islands this research effort would have been immensely more difficult. 114 In part this difficulty could be attributable to the workings of other researchers in this area. In particular, many of the islanders voiced deep concern over the book written by Carowan Ain't we Got a Right to the Tree of Life. These islanders felt this work was by no means an accurate representation of their life style or beliefs. But because 123 of the native heritage of the researcher many families agreed to participate in hopes of the writer being more able to accurately present the ethos of the Sea Island people.

128 DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical inference was the method of data analysis. The chi-square and the Fisher Exact Test were used to compute significance at either the .05, .01 or .001 level. The following analysis of relationship between the variables island, generation, and sex were conducted:

I Island (1,2,3,4,5) by questions one thru thirteen.

II Generation (1,2,3) by questions one thru thirteen.

III Sex (1,2) by questions one thru thirteen.

IV Island by generation by questions one thru thirteen.

7: Jackson 1 . (1973-1976) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina



APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

126 The recordings reflect a variety of speech genres and styles. Samples were recorded around firesites, in vegetable fields, in 'juke' joints, on the backs of trucks, in private homes and at crab hunts. The social stratification [124] of speakers ranges from a prosperous businessman and landowner to a semi-recluse. The samples reflect formal religious oratory, reminiscences, involved story-telling (called 'lies' by the islanders) and heated verbal debates, 'dozen style'.

•123 I was introduced to the Wadmalaw community by natives who were held in high esteem, and was welcomed to live among them and become involved with their daily work and play activities. On my third and last visit, I felt that I had been accepted not as a member to the community (to earn this kind of acceptance one must be born and raised on the island) but as a regularly visiting relative of SOME member of the community. The islanders were 123 cooperative and gave me invaluable assistance in locating 124 consultants who were elderly, long-term natives of the island with little formal education, and who could speak the purest form of Gullah. These requirements were not always reliable indices for descerning the true Creole

123 speaker. Many school-age children between the ages of 10
124 and 16 with formal education used Creole features as
frequently as many of the elderly consultants.

124 The following preliminaries were made in preparation
125 for the study:

1. A list of features known to be Creole to keep me alert to Creole construction types.
2. An awareness of conversation topics most likely to have a high probability of eliciting natural responses.
3. A word list containing minimal pairs for the elicitation of vowels and consonants.

124 The word list was not included until my third and
126 final visit to Wadmalaw Island. The list is long and the elicitation is painfully slow and exacting. I soon learned that some of the words on the list were unfamiliar to the consultants, but I was given their equivalent word replacements. For example, Gullah speakers do not often say *bit, air, coffin,* or *cot.* Instead they use *bite, breeze, pinto* and *setee,* respectively. Each consultant who aided with the phonology survey was one that I had known and spent a substantial amount of time with over the three year period. Those who were able to read pronounced the words into my tape recorder and I transcribed them on the spot. Others who were unable to read because of failing eyesight or other factors were asked to pronounce the words using different techniques. For example, I often asked questions such as, 'What do you wear on your feet when you go

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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175 533 fifty editions in less than a hundred years, gave way to the newer versions by Tate and Brady and by Isaac Watts. Although I have been unable to find any points of resemblance between Negro songs and those contained in the older collection, I have found traces of the influence of Dr. Watts—but only in word combinations. A Watts hymn, sung to long metre, runs as follows:

> Broad is the road that leads to death and thousands walk together there
> But wisdom shows a narrow path with here and there a traveller.

Katie Brown on Sapelo sings the following version—but to a tune that bears no relation to any I have ever heard:

(539)

> Narrow road is Heaven road
> Believer I know
> With here and there a traveller
> Believer I know
> The broad road is Hell road
> Believer I know
> Thousand walk together there
> Believer I know.

[177] It is self-evident that the Negro borrowed a word here, another there, whenever it pleased him, and he probably did the same with a musical phrase. But as is said by those who heard his songs at their best, soon after the Civil War, the creation for the most part was his own. The surprising thing is that so much of the traditional music has survived.

533 It is just possible that the almost human will to live displayed by many of the old songs has something to do with it. Frequently persons, who have heard the singers the night before, telephone for the words of a song. The tune haunts them, but without the verses they cannot give it expression. They have my sympathy. 533 I, too, have suffered in the same fashion, and been obliged in self-defense to • 123 learn the songs. When I complained to Julia, my cook, of their torment, she answered: "They do us that way too, until we learn them." Susyanna, in teaching me "A'n' Jinny Hoe-cake," looked at me knowingly, and said: "You'll be singin' this tomorrow." I was. Cha'lotte, from Ragged Island—one of the Bahama group—also told me they got in her mind "like a worm" and gave her no peace. As can be seen, these songs have no regard for color.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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tural movement and its works of art which have had such profound influence upon the art of the West in the last thirty years; which produced the talking drums, and developed rhythm to a point "two centuries ahead of Europe." [8] It is also significant that the art critics who write concerning the primitive sculpture of Africa call attention to the manner in which the best examples conform to canons that are universal and, according to Louis Carré, apply with equal force to European classic art. It is clearly no matter of accident that the Negroes who composed the Afro-American slave songs came from the very section of Africa which has yielded the finest specimens of sculptural art. Nor can it be considered a coincidence that musicians trained in the tradition of the "three B's" should marvel at the extraordinary feeling for rhythm and musical form shown in the slave compositions—"built on a foundation as solid as that of Bach," as one of them remarked after hearing the Negro singers of St. Simon's.

There seems to be no answer to the question of where the race got its intuitive knowledge of music (which musicians admit is acquired by white students only after years of study) unless we accept the theory advanced by Gobineau, the celebrated French Orientalist, that "the source from which the arts have sprung is concealed in the blood of the blacks"—with the concomitant conclusion that Ham must have been the musically gifted member of Noah's family.

So much for an historical outline of a form of music that ' said by Franklin Harris, the composer, to be as distinctive and individual as any in the world.[9] But what of its status today and its chance of survival?

Thirty years ago, when I first visited the coast of Georgia, I would have said it hadn't a ghost of a chance. But now, after seeing what persistence, plus a little money has accomplished, I am not so sure—although I am still certain that those with any interest whatsoever in this music must do more than they have in the past to keep it alive.

When I arrived on St. Simon's in 1912, the stillness of the Negroes was puzzling until questioning brought out the fact that the island was a summer resort, and contact with city whites and their black servants had had its numbing influence; that the old-time singing had gone out of style, and spirituals weren't sung any more. After three musically barren winters I discovered, however, that a few Negroes

[8] *In the words of W. E. Ward. For the complete quotation, see page 10.*
[9] *Call it "hybrid" if you will—but a name cannot alter its right to recognition.*

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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123 126 533 remembered their old songs and could be induced to sing for me if I would make it worth their while. This was in 1915, and, ever since, I have been doing just that: making it worth their while. During the bleak winters of the depression, some of the singers literally sang for their supper—which, they thankfully observed, the Lord had provided. In 1929 it was found expedient to put a cabin at my "Corner," and ever since overflow audiences from the resort hotel at Sea Island have worn a path to its door.

868 533 All of which goes to prove that this exotic music need not be given up for lost so long as a few singers live to teach the traditional technique (Illustration 13[A]) to the younger generation—on whom its survival depends. Long ago the need of training the children seemed to me particularly urgent, and six groups in two counties were taught by older singers, until hard times put an end to the undertaking. In the last few years the value of such instruction has been proved in the help the young people have given their groups at the "sings" on St. Simon's. (Illustration 25[B]) Where death has thinned the ranks of the older singers, the younger ones have filled the gaps with distinction.

533 177 178 But genuine Negro music is confronted by a real menace in the scornful attitude of those Negro school-teachers [10] who do their utmost to discredit and uproot every trace of it. Instead of being inordinately proud of their race's contribution to the music of the world, as they have every right to be, too many of them treat it like a family skeleton. In the schoolroom, even in sections where spirituals may be said to be indigenous, they are suppressed, and the supposedly "more artistic" Europeanized book versions are laboriously learned. This misplaced zeal even follows the pupils into the school yard. Such musically commonplace English game songs as "The Farmer Takes a Wife"—although I admit the action is picturesque—are substituted for such joyous Afro-American melodies as "Go roun' the Border, Susie" —for all the world like carrying synthetic coals to Newcastle! It must be remembered, however, that the teachers cannot be blamed for the harm they do the musical taste of their pupils: they only reflect the type of training imposed upon the race since 1861. No one quarrels with any system of education that helps the Negro to hold his own in a white man's country; but when a system is employed which causes him to despise everything African, and to throw away his birthright at a time when

177 178

[10] *At Hampton Institute, when I protested at the way the old tunes were altered, a music instructor* loftily informed me: "When they are wrong, of course they must be changed."

A. [For Illustration 13, see Category 114, plate facing p. 81—Analyst]
B. [For Illustration 25, see Category 533, plate facing p. 145—Analyst]

91 Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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535 Island, called by the incongruous railroad term "Ball the Jack." [15] A few years
171 ago I saw it demonstrated by an old resident of Eleuthera, in the Bahamas, and its portrayal in the film *Sanders of the River*—for which "background shots" were made in villages along the Congo—indicates the region from which it originally came.

• 123 These dances, and such plantation activities as beating and fanning rice in the traditional African manner, provide effective material for those in the family group who are moving-picture addicts. It is also possible that such survivals persist on our plantations as are not to be found elsewhere in America this side of Haiti or Dutch Guiana; but do not be discouraged if they do not come when you call. It took years for me to see the ring-shout and the Buzzard Lope, and to see and hear the ring-play dances and songs, and the songs in an African dialect. It is a curious fact that the Negro rarely volunteers information—on the sound principle, perhaps, that if you tell nothing you have nothing to regret; and this is my reason for giving so many identifying titles and lines. If you know what to ask for, the work is half done.

000 For the plantation owner who cares to take the trouble, a barbecue provides the quickest route to results. If the procedure is not already known, an old resident will tell how one should be conducted, and who is competent to do the work. Both whites and blacks remember with nostalgic regret the days when a barbecue celebrated the end of the plantation harvest. For the sake of the picture, if dancing takes place after the feast instead of before, a generous fat-wood fire should be built as close to a spreading live oak as is safe, and a few prizes of old-fashioned white aprons, gilt hoop earrings, gay handkerchiefs for the heads of the women, and red bandanas for the necks of the men should be supplied. A temporary platform of broad boards laid—on two-by-fours or on any firm foundation—under the oak tree will repay the extra trouble. If the plantation is not too near a city, there is likely to be such dancing and entertainment as would make a Broadway producer green with envy. An occasion like this brings out the best—also the worst—in the way of talent, and gives an opportunity to evaluate what is to be found at the back door.

Old songs like "O de Robe" and "Norah Hist the Windah" are suitable for a restful evening; but let it end with shouting, as was customary at the old-time prayer meetings, and the whole atmosphere will change. There will be an inner

[15] *I am told that the action employed in "Snake Hip" is similar to that used in "Ball the Jack."*

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CHAPTER TWO

## *African Survivals on the Coast of Georgia*

123 There are survivals of African songs on the coast of Georgia. But let no outsider imagine they can be heard for the asking. From experience I know this to be true. It took me three winters on St. Simon's to hear a single slave song, three times as many winters to see the religious dance called the ring-shout, still more winters to unearth the Buzzard Lope and similar solo dances, and the game songs known as ring-play. It may be only a coincidence, but the "funny songs" with African words, translated by Dr. Lorenzo D. Turner, have been the last to be found. They were discovered about the time Negro educators began to teach their pupils that the term African was not synonymous with barbarism, and that Africa had a culture of its own.

181 The secretiveness of the Negro is, I believe, the fundamental reason for our ignorance of the race and its background, and this trait is in itself probably an African survival. Melville J. Herskovits bears out such a conclusion when he quotes a Dutch Guiana Bush Negro as saying: "Long ago our ancestors taught us that it is unwise for a man to tell anyone more than half of what he knows about anything." [1] It is amusing to question Southerners as to the number of times they remember hearing Negroes volunteer information. Not one so far has recalled an instance in which something has been told that was not common knowledge.

181 829 This inborn reticence, coupled with the fact that natives of Africa remember little about their forebears farther back than their grandparents,[2] is undoubtedly responsible for the race's lack of a past in either the Old World or the New. It is possible, however, that there may be a cause for their apparent forgetfulness of which the white man is unaware. On Sapelo I got the distinct impression from two descendants of Old Bilali, the famous Mohammedan slave, that the dead were dead,

[1] Handbook of Social Psychology.
[2] Mentioned by Clement Egerton in African Majesty.

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their manners are in their own keeping. The men may have, for instance, as many wives as they please, so long as they do not quarrel about such matters." And, I notice, Southerners on our coast still tacitly observe this tradition.

When I began the work of actively retrieving slave songs, and instituted "sings" at the Cabin in front of my cottage, I found it expedient to follow the same procedure. The group—silently, be it remembered—made it clear that such matters as jail sentences and surplus wives were their affair, whereas my concern was limited to their music, although anything—such as drinking, "soldiering," or insubordination—which interfered with its proper presentation was distinctly within my province.

As a concrete example of the lengths to which the Negro carries his reluctance to give information, I can do no better than tell how Julia taught me a valuable lesson: never take anything for granted. After being my laundress for three winters, she became my cook in 1915, and for the fifteen years in all she enjoyed a precious secret. With her as intermediary I was able to hear the slave songs. She never sang a note on my place, and I assumed that she could not. But in 1927, at Mrs. Arnold's funeral, her dramatic moment arrived. With the group she had brought to my door, she stood beside the open grave, and she sang as well as the others. When I periodically ask why, in all those years, she never told me she could sing, she smiles quizzically, but says nothing. Perhaps she does not know herself.

However, it is just possible that an age-old compensation complex explains the situation. I am convinced that the average Negro enjoys intensely knowing something that the white man does not, and the exquisite delight he derives from realizing that the white man has been bested in a little game makes up for any loss or indignity he may be obliged to endure. Julia's game was innocent and her loss was financial, but that such tactics may have a less pleasant side—aimed at the eventual discomfiture of an exacting employer—it may be well to remember.

Before leaving the subject of the Negro's secretiveness, it may be well to consider this racial characteristic in relation to another that is quite as often mentioned by travelers in Africa: dread of derision.[6] It seems to me that the attitude of the whites toward the blacks has never been calculated to encourage the latter to parade their Africanisms. The slave trader's need of justification, and our ignorance of Africa and its culture, enabled him to persuade us that Africans were barbarians in

[6] *Fear of ridicule enables African blackmailers with a gift of clever improvisation to collect tribute from their thin-skinned brothers—for the songs they do not sing.*

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Another custom, more widespread than is generally known, probably originated in Africa. When a new building is completed it is christened with prayer and song, followed by shouting. The afternoon Joe and Clarence finished the Cabin, (Illustration 12),[A] Clarence made a prayer and asked a blessing, Julia put rice in the four corners for good luck, and after a few songs it was considered that the building was auspiciously launched.

The addition to the original Cabin was *not* blessed. It is a curious fact that the roof developed leaks at once, termites got into the floor, and it was necessary to rebuild the whole section. If such bad luck continues, it will look as though the Sapelo idea is not far wrong. There, it is considered most unwise to put on an addition to an old house. "You will lose some member of your family if you do."

In the papering of the Cabin, on my own initiative, I took another precaution which has afforded the singers much amusement. The walls of many small cabins are covered with news-print, because the prevailing idea in the old days was that a hag had to read every word before she could work evil on you.[30] I used the financial section of *The New York Times* for good measure. In the accompanying illustration (Illustration 14),[B] it can be seen how this original type of wallpaper enhances the picture made by the singers, and separates them from their background. It was made during the closing song—"One a These Days, My Sister"—when Willis was shaking the hand of Bessie in accordance with the usual custom at prayer meeting in a less sophisticated era.

DeZayas, in *African Negro Art*, tells of an exceedingly sensitive devil at Sierra Leone, who requires the utmost respect, and, if not propitiated by liberal offerings of palm wine, rice, and fowl, will certainly bring trouble to those invoking his intervention. Every time he is consulted, rice flour must first be offered. However, our Negroes disclaim any knowledge of their reason for using rice at a housewarming, except to bring good luck.

Chance often enables us to discover new examples of the general belief in occult forces. Such was the case when a friend and I heard a cracking report in my empty kitchen. On investigation we found that a glass bowl had broken in half. The next day Julia told me it is a sure sign that some member of your family is going

[30] A similar notion is held in Nassau according to M. Cavel in "Items of Folk-Lore from Bahama Negroes," in Vol. 17 of the Journal of American Folk-Lore. "If you think you are being hagged, take a pint of benne seed . . . and guinea corn . . . spill it all in the four corners of your house; that will catch the hag as she cannot leave the house before she has picked up all the seeds, one by one, during the night."

A, [For Illustration 12, see Category 342, plate facing p. 80--Analyst]
B, [For Illustration 14, see Category 353, plate facing p. 96--Analyst]

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During ante-bellum days shouting was as much a part of the Sunday afternoon service as the sermon. By 1900, however, the more fashionable Negro preachers felt that this mode of worship could not be correct, since it did not conform to the conventional pattern of the white man's service; they began to frown upon the religious dance as they did upon the use of "Amen" and similar responses by the congregation. Even so, the hold of shouting is tenacious, and it is practiced during the Christmas holidays[2] to this day. All the country Negroes enjoy it immensely, though many are unwilling to admit that they know how to do it, as they consider the dance old-fashioned. It was years before I was permitted to see the St. Simon's Negroes indulge in this innocent performance. Why they should have been so secretive about such a pastime I cannot understand, unless—because the style of dancing is unlike ours—they were afraid I might laugh at it.

535
(123)

I shall never forget the night at the hall of the Queen of the South Society when I first saw the ring-shout. Hard board benches were an unimportant matter. Little had I suspected, when Margaret took care of my room at the Arnold House years before, that she could outdo the Ouled Nail Dancers, of Biskra—if she wished. As it was, she wiggled her hips shamelessly, held her shoulders stiff—at the same time thrusting them forward—kept her feet flat on the floor, and, with the usual rhythmic heel-tapping, progressed with real style around the circle—goodness knows how. White folks who attempt the step of the true ring-shout find it difficult exercise. Few young Negroes will do it, and the Big Apple, with the stamp of the white man's approval, has recently been more popular. Should shouting ever achieve the same vogue, its life would be prolonged.

It was good fun telling the St. Simon's Negroes—too self-conscious in earlier years to shout—how a professional performer, Tamiris, seen in New York was dancing spirituals. There is a wide gulf between such a professional and Cornelia, but I am certain that the white artist, no matter how skillful, could learn something in the way of form from this colored woman, whose lean fine frame, beaked nose, and keen eyes bespeak her Arab ancestry—on the male side. As for Edith—who, being a Murphy, is temperamental—every now and then she gives a stylized, angular performance as though copying the poses of the figures in Egyptian decorations. The way she holds her arms and hands is perfect. It positively hurts that I have no moving picture of her statuesque, rhythmic pauses, or the pause Gertrude (Illustration

(175)
(529)

[2] Joe Armstrong tells me that before the War Between the States, "Jubilee time began on Monday before Christmas with a big eat of pork and baked yams."

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## 14. BLOW GABRIEL

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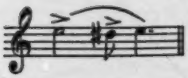

533 Undoubtedly the greater part of these songs originated under the stress of re-
786 ligious emotion, such as Laura showed when she strode to the middle of my yard
152 and, with a commanding arm lifted high, intoned musically, "Blow, Gabriel!" as
159 though sure of a response. Then she called again—louder this time—"Blow, Gabriel!" and still no answer. She waited a moment before calling at the top of her lungs, "Blow, Gabriel!"—and when nothing happened, she turned, complaining bitterly, gathered up the bunch of white oleanders she had laid beside me, and left as suddenly as she had come. Half chanting to Gabriel, she improvised as she went swiftly down the road, waving the flowers she had probably intended for the grave of her son, who lies in the old slave burying ground at Kelvin Grove.

786 It seems that earlier in the day she had shrieked and chanted, as is common
159 with those who get this type of religious hysteria. In the old days such excitement was a more usual and respected occurrence than now. The reference in old spirituals to "My head got wet wid de midnight dew" meant that under religious exaltation the individual wandered at night through wood and swamp, as Laura had for several days and nights before I saw her at the locked gate which barred her way to the plantation graveyard.

123 I called, "Where are you going?" She seemed to waken out of a dream and said,
786 "I forgot." Then she came closer, and impressively declaimed, "Miz' Parris'—I bin
787 sent by God to you. They say I'm crazy, an' they put me in jail nine days—but I'se
159 seen God!" After a long harangue delivered in an impassioned but disconnected way, she told me she had spent Tuesday night in Hell, that she'd been crucified. The blood had trickled down her back, the thorns had pierced her arms. She threw her arms out wide as though to show me. When she noticed they weren't clean, in an abashed aside she apologetically said, "I ain't wash 'em this mornin'." Then she went on, "You needn' tell me that God meant white folks an' colored people to sit down together."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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123 I assured her, when she paused for breath, that I realized the truth of what she
781 said. She told me how she had been out picking berries that morning, and a rattlesnake
825 had charmed her little boy. "I call' to him an' he couldn' move—he jus' look at the
159 snake like this." (She stooped down and stared fixedly ahead of her.) "When I pull' him away, the snake went shzzzz! and the poison went into me." Then it was that she strode into the middle of the yard and called upon Gabriel.

159 The next morning I was distressed to find that Laura had been taken to jail
123 again. My cook, Julia, and I talked the situation over and decided we would be easier in our minds if we knew she ought to be there. Though noisy the day before, she appeared to be harmless. Dr. Cate, the county physician, kindly took us to the jail at noon, as he also wished to see her. When we reached her cell, he asked, "Well, Laura, what are you here for?" Her reply impressed me very much. "It's not for drinkin' or fightin'—it's a religious affair." But when she went on to say, "I'm havin' a religious war, and I'm puttin' up a dam' good fight," I realized she had better stay
(539) where she was until her ardor cooled:

Blow Gabriel
At the Judgment
Blow Gabriel
At the Judgment Barl
Blow 'um easy
At the Judgment
Blow 'um easy
At the Judgment Barl
My Lord call you
At the Judgment
My Lord call you
At the Judgment Barl
Why don't you answer
At the Judgment
Why don't you answer
At the Judgment Barl
Ha-Ha angel
At the Judgment
Ha-Ha angel
At the Judgment Barl

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533
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Lord called Jonah t' Nineveh Lan'
To preach the gospel in de terrible d'man'
Jonah risen an' 'e went on down de Joppa two years started over
yonda to Tarsha two years to wait 'pon God's comman'
Got on the ship went down to de lowermos' deck
The cap'n of de ship started to sail
Got in de midst o' de middle o' de deep
The cap'n of de ship got de trouble in min'
Search the ship from bow t' stern
The' foun' ole Jonah fast asleep
Wake up . . .

The last two lines, which ended with "tell you now," I could not get. These were followed by the chorus. Further vicissitudes of Jonah were related in two more long verses.

## AN' HE NEVER SAID A MUMBLIN' WORD

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Last Easter I attended service, by special request, at a makeshift Baptist "tabernacle" far from the highway, in the pine wilderness of Camden County. There was a roof over a part of the one-story shack, but it lacked sides except behind the pulpit. The benches were planks on blocks of wood, and pine slabs were put on the swampy ground to keep our feet dry. In his sermon the minister pointedly stressed the fact that spiritual comfort was infinitely to be preferred over that of the flesh. His earnestness and conviction in describing Christ's appearance before Pilate, and the fortitude with which He bore His sufferings, made the scene too vivid for Phyllis, who became excited, jumped from her seat, and shrieked: "He didn't do nothin'! No He didn't! He was an innocent man! Yes He was!" She was in truth a modern witness for my Lord.

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See how they done my Lord
done my Lord
done my Lord
See how they done my Lord
An' He never said a mumblin' word.

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764 "preach the funeral," [24] the St. Simon's Negroes would row all the way to Savannah
993 —over eighty miles—to get him. They landed at Frederica, where the First African
[775] Baptist Church was located.

764 At Aaron's funeral Laura gave the time-honored dramatic touch by growing
152 hysterical, throwing up her arms, and screaming: "Good-bye Aaron—y'u gone for-
[767] ever." While the clods were shoveled upon the coffin, singing providentially kept us from hearing the sound. Different men, headed by the undertaker, took turns filling in the grave. The way they joked and laughed as they worked rather shocked me. I understand, however, that Africans show the same levity after distressing occasions.

764 M. H. Kingsley, in *Travels in West Africa*, mentions the intense love of the
191 African for funerals, and, according to the descriptions given by other explorers, there is a striking similarity in the burial customs of the natives and their rural American cousins. In Africa it is believed that the position of the ghost in the other world requires that the funeral be as expensive as the family can possibly provide. Furthermore, without a fitting ceremony the departed spirit cannot reach its final destination. but lingers among the living, making conditions very uncomfortable for them. The Negroes of our Southern states show the same feeling about
764 funerals. They spare no expense in making them elaborate affairs. One that took place on St. Simon's years ago will long be remembered: "Why, Mrs. Parris', it cost four hundred dollars. They sent to Savannah for flowers, and she was buried in new white slippers that cost six dollars . . . !" I notice that the American Negro, no matter what the work or business in hand, puts it aside for such an event. To pay the cost of a funeral that will be a credit to the corpse as well as his family, the
[426] survivors will mortgage what property they may have, if they have not been so
[767] provident as to take out an insurance policy, join a "Bury League," or pay to some society or lodge dues which range from ten to twenty-five cents a week.

[24] When Quarterman's son-in-law died. his daughter said to me: "Tell the old man my husband died three weeks ago and the funeral will be preached next Sunday." Then she asked me if I would please give her a black hat. A Northern friend frequently sent me boxes of summer hats in the autumn. If the original owners could have seen them in winter on the dusky wearers, they would have been surprised. The fun of fitting out the singers with becoming hats has always made me wonder if I hadn't missed my calling.

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